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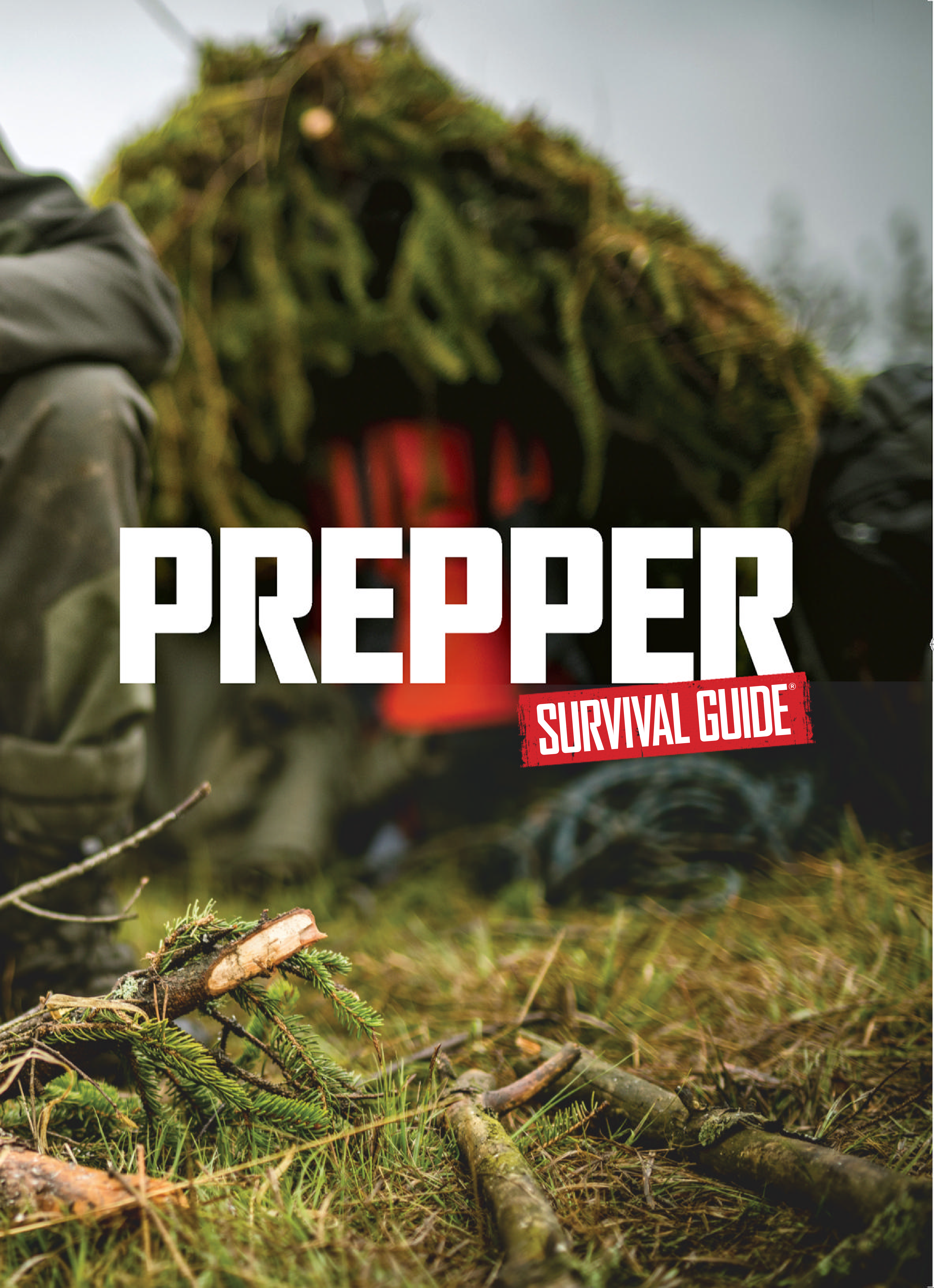

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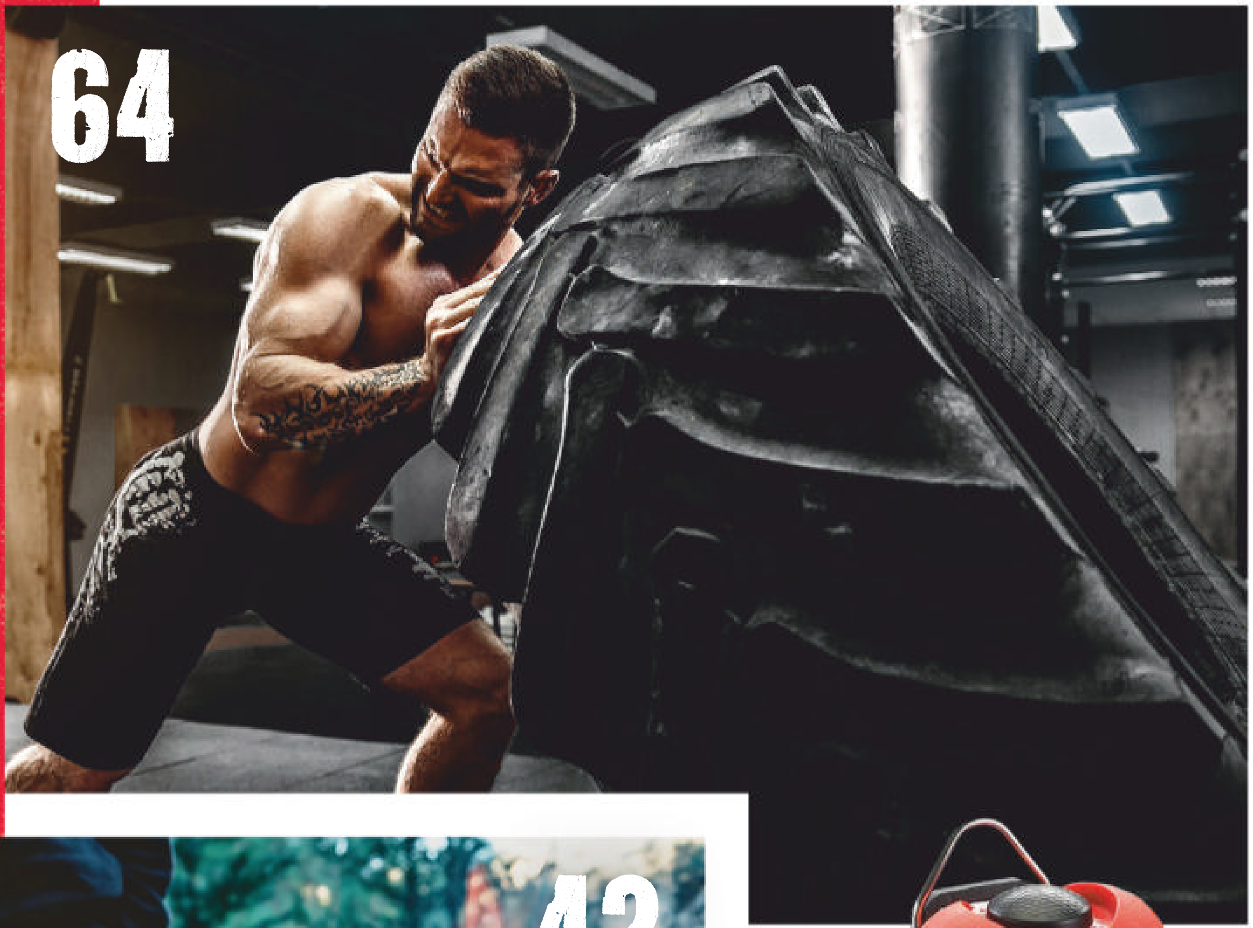

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The advice given in this magazine is the opinion of the author of each article, based on their personal experiences and knowledge. The right response to a disaster may not be the same in all situations. Articles are for informational purposes only. The publisher accepts no responsibility for injuries or liability arising from relying upon information contained herein. In the event of an emergency, follow the advice of first responders and trained professionals. Have a preparedness plan researched from multiple sources and avoid high-risk situations. Follow all applicable federal, state and local laws regarding firearm ownership, carry and use.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to *PREPPER SURVIVAL GUIDE*!

This is our 17th issue! For those of you who've been with us since the beginning, I can't thank you enough for sticking with us. If you're new to *PSG*, we're going to do our level best to knock your socks off. Our goal in every issue is to provide you with practical information that will keep you and your family safe when a crisis hits.

What you'll find inside are great articles put together by men and women who aren't just experienced in their subject matter, but have a gift for being able to teach it to others.

This is our special bug-out-themed issue, so with that in mind, we have stories on how to keep your plans realistic, how to determine evacuation routes, how to decide when you should hit the road, and even how to prepare your body to have the endurance needed for such a trip.

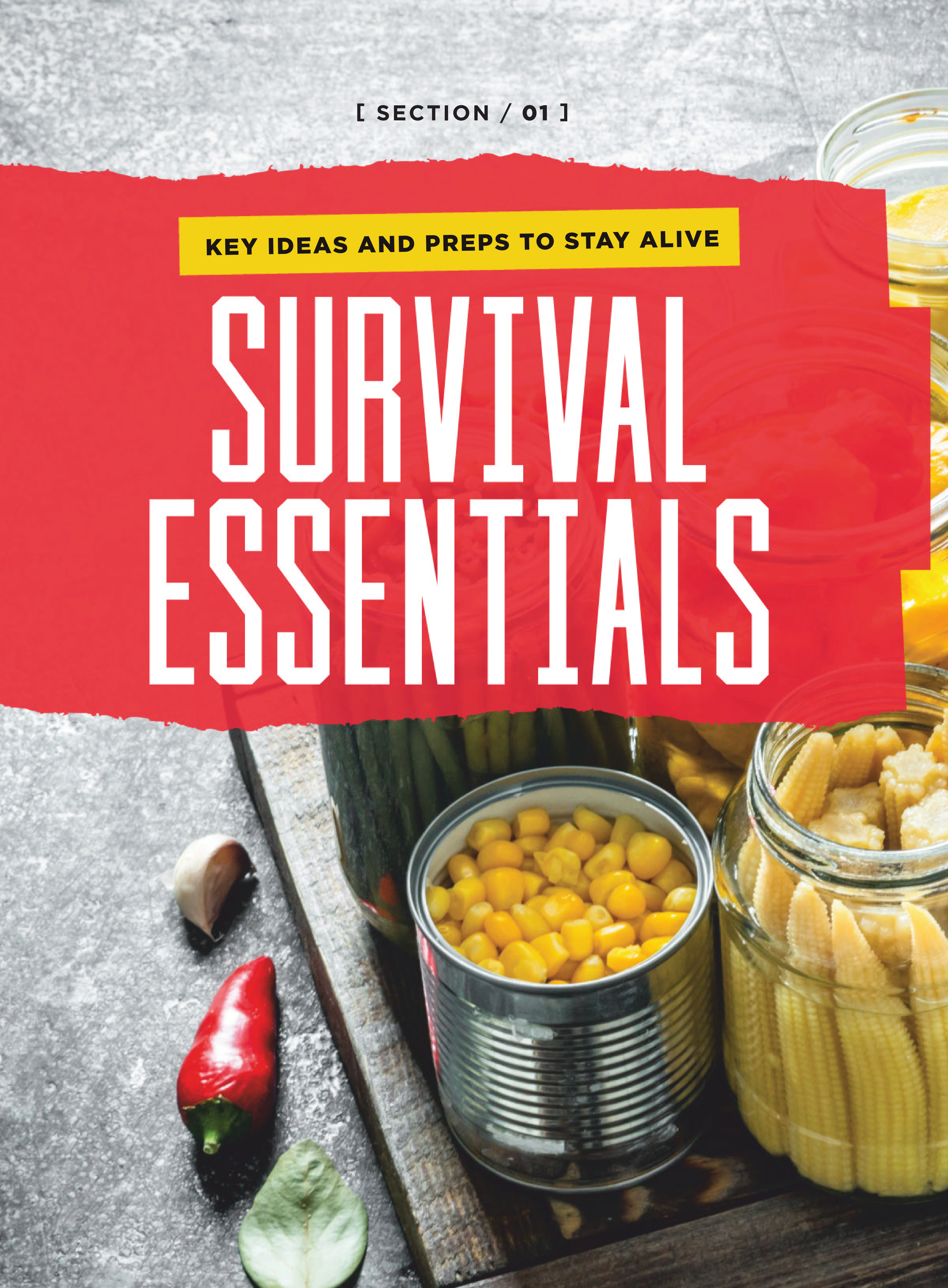
That's not all! We're also covering storing water, gathering important documents, concealing valuables at home and the best ways to de-escalate confrontations. Plus, we have a few roundups of all the best new gear out there. But all of the articles in the world won't help you if you don't prepare and convert the information we've provided into practice. That way, when an emergency happens, you'll be ready to take the right action.

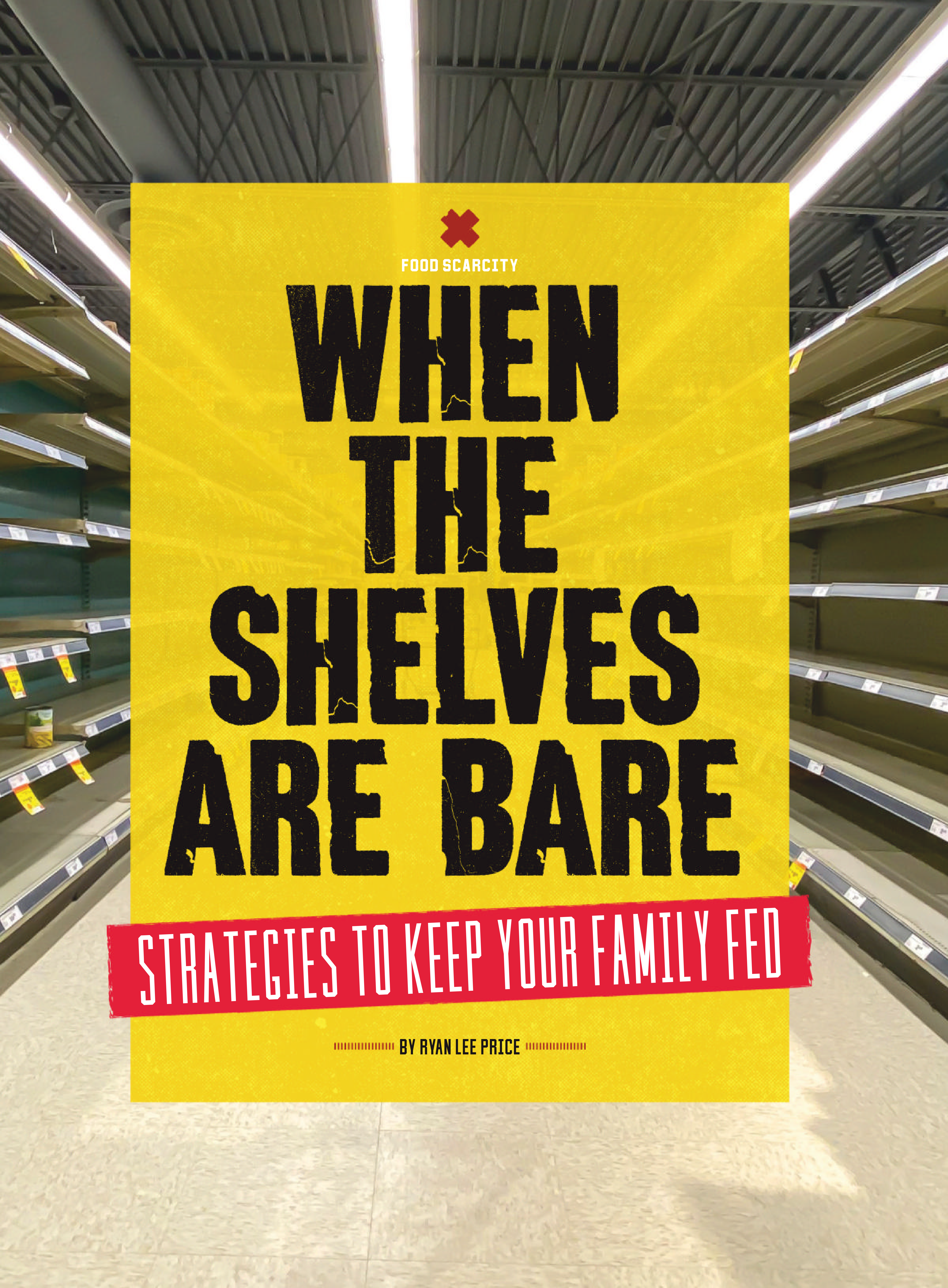
—Jim Cobb, Editor-in-Chief

[SECTION / 01]

KEY IDEAS AND PREPS TO STAY ALIVE

SURVIVAL ESSENTIALS





FOOD SCARCITY

WHEN THE SHELVES ARE BARE

STRATEGIES TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY FED

BY RYAN LEE PRICE

This is becoming an all-too-common sight in grocery stores across the country.

THESE DAYS, IT SEEMS THAT PANIC CAN SET IN AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE WHEN IT COMES TO SECURING ESSENTIALS. IN MARCH 2020, AS FEARS ABOUT COVID-19 BEGAN, STORES EMPTIED OUT OF TOILET PAPER, BOTTLED WATER AND CANNED FOOD WITHIN A DAY OR TWO. FAST FORWARD TO THIS YEAR, WITH SKYROCKETING GAS PRICES, MASSIVE INFLATION AND LACK OF WORKERS IN THE TRUCKING INDUSTRY—AND IT'S A RECIPE FOR WIDESPREAD SHORTAGES OF A LOT OF PRODUCTS.

TANGIBLE EVIDENCE IS that local grocery stores just don't have as much product as they used to, and what may follow are a lack of choices and reduced availability of food stuffs in your neighborhood. If you prepare now, there are viable options to keep your family fed and healthy when the shelves empty out the next time there is even the slightest public emergency.

BUY IN BULK

Stores like Costco and Sam's Club offer almost anything you can think of in bulk form. Need 50 pounds of rice? Five gallons of pickles? They have it. Buying shelf-stable food in bulk and properly storing it is a great way to keep a cache of food for long-term use. When shopping at bulk food stores with the plan of beefing up your food storage, look for items that will last a long time, such as canned goods, grains, pastas and beans. And don't panic buy. Instead, when you buy something, buy two. Eat one and store the other. When you finish with one, buy two more. You'll slowly increase your food supply without emptying your wallet.

Anything that lasts about three to five years will

Explore some offbeat sources for supplies. For example, office supply stores usually carry toilet paper, snack food and cleaning products, as well as pens and printers.

serve you well in the near future, as there are only a few foods that last for many years (like honey and powdered milk), so you'll have to date and rotate those foods out of your stash periodically. Keeping an active inventory of what you have, where it is stored, when you bought it and when it expires is an important step in buying foods in bulk.

SHOP ONLINE

If there is a food shortage due to a regional situation, consider buying your food online. There are dozens of food delivery services, in addition to your local grocery store. The most popular is Instacart, a subscription-based service that sends a shopper directly to your local store, but that's the problem. If there's a local emergency, your nearby shop will be swept clean, so you need to find a company that can deliver from warehouses in other parts of the country. Amazon and Walmart are good choices, as they have redundant policies in place to deliver from across the country.

Another option is to follow the same principle as bulk shopping: Go online and have a few things delivered each week, until you have about a month's worth of food readily available. Most online food retailers and wholesalers will ship for free if you purchase over a certain amount. Companies like Azure Standard offer natural, organic foods that can be shipped nationally.

LEARN TO GARDEN

Not everyone has the ability or space to grow a garden with enough variety to supply an entire family with food for a long-term situation. But it doesn't take that much space to grow food, regardless of your living conditions. If your apartment has a patio, consider container gardening with buckets and pots. Tomatoes grow very well in containers, as do potatoes, carrots and other popular vegetables.

And if you have a plot of land you can convert to a garden, it'll be one of the best things you can do to become food independent. Research and plan your garden carefully, as there are countless ways to maximize your yield in relation to the space you have. A very popular gardening method is the Three Sisters Garden, which consists of corn, beans and squash—three vegetables that complement the others with nutrients while supporting one another in the garden.

PRESERVE WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

Crops don't do well in the winter, and if you live in a place where it snows or the ground freezes, you'll likely not be able to get anything from a garden (unless you build a greenhouse). But that doesn't mean you

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WE MAKE NUTRITION TASTE GOOD
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BONE SUPPORT

Take the leap to home canning and other methods of food preservation.

Warehouse stores allow you to stock up by purchasing in bulk, provided you have room to store it all at home.

can't take advantage of preserving any excess food that's been harvested from your garden in the fall.

Even if you buy from local farmers, the best way to make stores last all through the winter is to learn preservation techniques, specifically, canning food. There is a learning curve involved and some specialized equipment to buy, like a pressure canner, large stockpots and jars, but once you know how to do it, you'll have shelves full of food that will last at least a couple of years.

For meat, learn how to make jerky. You can even preserve it in a dozen different ways, like curing with salt, drying, brining and smoking it.

SURVIVAL STAPLES

This is a very popular method to obtain a great deal of food that is shelf-stable for years (or in some cases even decades!) and provides a balanced meal for your whole family with minimal preparation. Similar to K-rations and freeze-dried camping food where you just add water and stir, these foods come in pouches and buckets ready to be doled out in quantities that match your

PLAN AHEAD AND USE ALL OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO STAY PROPERLY NOURISHED.

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
SAVOR THE ADVENTURE
FAST SKILLET
13g PROTEIN
2 SERVINGS
NET WT 4.73 OZ (134g)
SIMPLE KITCHEN
freeze-dried
BLUEBERRIES & YOGURT
real fruit snacks!
NET WT. 1.61 OZ (43G)

Freeze-dried foods last quite a long time.

group size and time frame.

My Patriot Supply, for example, offers a product with a 25-year shelf life. The three-month supply kit has 21 food varieties, including stroganoff, macaroni and cheese, pancakes and chicken dishes that provide 2,000 calories per person per day.

There are other nuances in methods and imagination that will help you avoid going hungry in a situation where panic buying or supply shortages decimate the store shelves. Start by only cooking the amount of food you can reasonably eat, so you'll use less. And learn to cook things from scratch rather than relying on packaged foods, which will increase your culinary creativity and make foods last longer. The desired result, after all, is to provide a healthy balanced diet for you and your family while stretching your supply of food for as long as possible, because you never know how long your grocery store's shelves will be bare.

About the Author *Ryan Lee Price is a freelance writer living in Corona, California, with his wife and kids. When not exploring the flora and fauna of the backwoods, he is busy climbing Southern California's tallest peaks.*

WHOLESALE SUPPLIERS

BUY DIRECT FROM DISTRIBUTORS.

Although wholesaler food suppliers like U.S. Foods and Sysco normally only sell to grocery stores and restaurants, there are a host of wholesalers from which you can order preselected boxes of products (like meat and vegetables) or custom selections. However, most of these wholesalers are regional and will not ship or deliver to your door if you are outside a certain radius of the warehouse. You'll have to pick up your order directly. If you live in Austin, Texas, for example, you can order meat and produce from the wholesaler Farm to Table. If you live near Philadelphia, you can order meat from Ashley Foods. And if you're in Los Angeles, Nature's Produce has a special customer portal to order food, while Rocker Bros. is a well-supplied butcher. Also local wholesale bakeries and butchers might offer their services to the general public. For national delivery, wholesalers like Bargain Wholesale and Round Eye Supply offer their customers bulk buy options that include delivery but will come with a purchase minimum of around $2,000—which is a lot of food.

You'll save money on some things but be prepared to pay more for others. Vegetables are usually cheaper than buying them at your grocery store, but most types of meat will be more expensive, since wholesalers sell to higher-end restaurants, which usually want to order better cuts.

✖ **Farm to Table**
farmtotabletx.com

✖ **Ashley Foods**
ashleyfoodsinc.com

✖ **Nature's Produce**
naturesproduce.com

✖ **Rocker Bros.**
rockerbrosmeat.com

✖ **Bargain Wholesale**
bargainw.com

✖ **Round Eye Supply**
roundeyesupply.com

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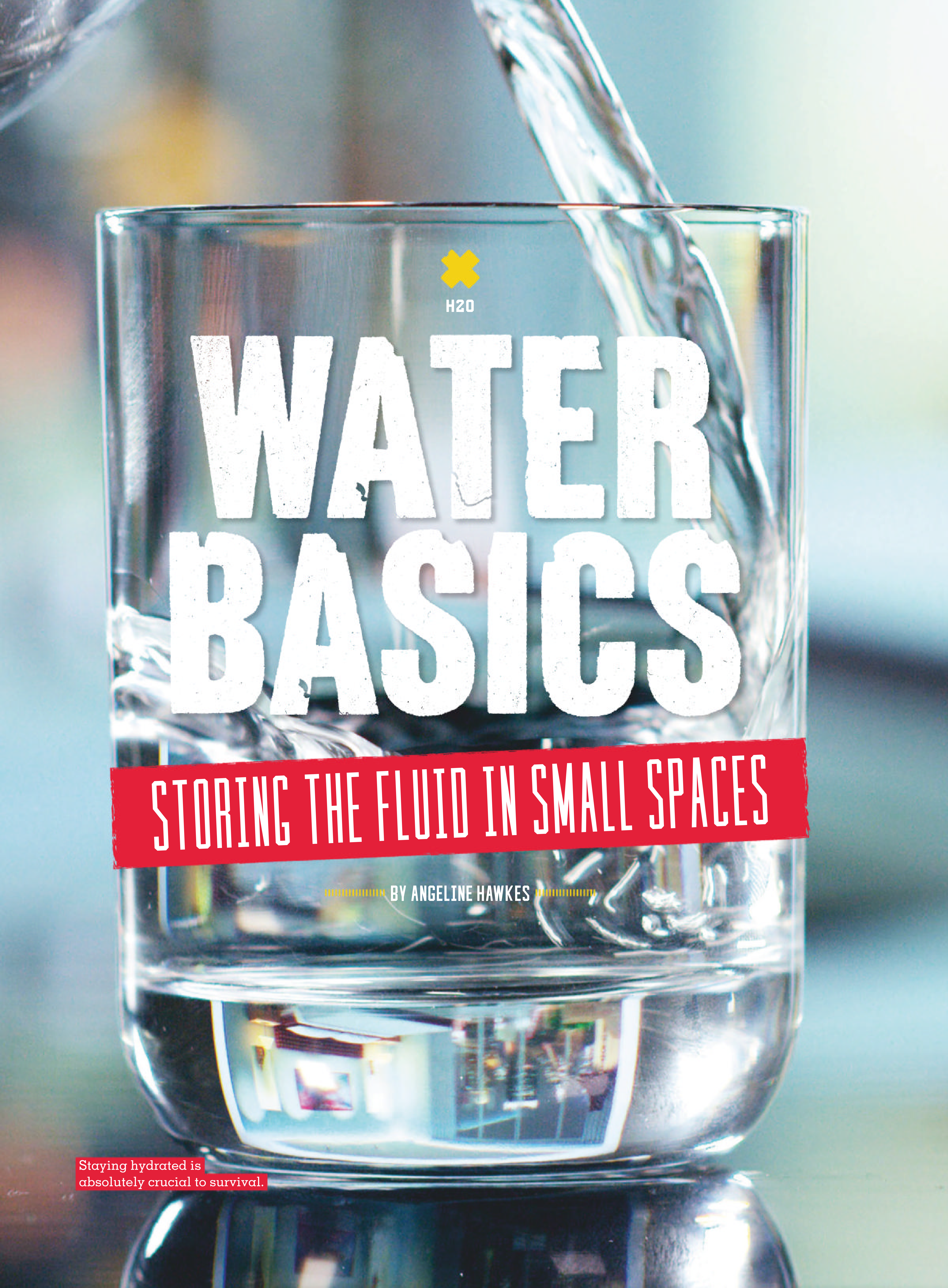


H2O

WATER BASICS

STORING THE FLUID IN SMALL SPACES

BY ANGELINE HAWKES

Staying hydrated is absolutely crucial to survival.

ACCORDING TO THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO), 829,000 PEOPLE WORLDWIDE DIE EACH YEAR FROM UNSAFE DRINKING WATER. IN A CRISIS, HAVING CLEAN WATER COULD MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FORCED EVACUATION OR SHELTERING IN PLACE. STORING DRINKING WATER IN AN URBAN RESIDENCE WITH LIMITED SPACE IS POSSIBLE; IT JUST REQUIRES A BIT OF CREATIVE THINKING.

LIVING IN AN URBAN apartment doesn't lend itself to storage spaces for bulky tanks. Instead, think small and more. First, select BPA-free, food-grade plastic containers. One-gallon recycled juice bottles or 1-gallon emergency water bottles are ideal for this situation. (One gallon weighs 8.3 pounds.) Jugs that are square fit better on shelves than rounder designs.

What is BPA? BPA is short for bisphenol A, a chemical used in plastics since the 1950s. Recently, scientists began linking possible health conditions to BPA exposure. The Mayo Clinic advises that consumers purchase plastic products identified as BPA-free. If the item is marked with a 3 or 7 recycle code, it probably contains BPA. Look for a PETE or HDPE recycle code somewhere on the container. Your storage container should also be break resistant, have a screw-top lid and be made from a material that won't rust or corrode. Stainless steel may seem like a good idea, but bleach and purifying treatments will corrode it. And don't use milk jugs. These plastics are usually biodegradable and will break down and leak. Also don't reuse containers that originally held detergents, chemicals, bleach or anything nonfood related. Store filled containers out of the sunlight, preferably in a cool location (50-70°F).

PURIFYING IT FOR STORAGE

Once you have gathered 1-gallon bottles, you'll need to treat the water before storing it. There are three reliable methods recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and WHO: household bleach, iodine and chlorine dioxide purifying tablets.

✖ Bleach

Sodium hypochlorite is the ingredient in bleach that disinfects. Bleach should contain 5-9% sodium hypochlorite to be effective. Below is the CDC chart of recommended bleach-to-water ratios for successful water treatment. If you are treating discolored water from a lake or other body of

HOW MUCH BLEACH TO USE?

	1 Quart/ Liter Water	1 Gallon Water	5 Gallons Water
Dropper	2 drops of bleach	8 drops of bleach	40 drops of bleach
Milliliters (mL)	Add 0.1 mL of bleach	Add ½ mL of bleach	Add 2½ mL of bleach
Measuring Spoon	Too small to determine with measuring spoon	Add a little less than ⅛ teaspoon of bleach	Add ½ teaspoon of bleach

CLOROX
DISINFECTS & CLEANS
Iodine tincture
Iodine 2.5%
Potassium iodide 2.5%
FLORIS
Antiseptic for disinfection
Multidose
10 ml

There are a few products you can use for disinfection.

Water is heavy, so be sure to lift with your legs, not with your back.

Finding places to store water, particularly if you live in a small apartment or condo, can be tricky. But there are options, especially if you get a little creative.

water, or any nontap water, you should double the bleach amounts in the chart.

Iodine

Iodine will kill almost all germs, but not cryptosporidium (see sidebar, opposite page). There are also known health conditions aggravated or caused by iodine. Pregnant women, those with thyroid conditions and iodine allergies should avoid iodine-treated water. The WHO recommends consuming iodine-treated water for no longer than a few weeks for all involved. To use, add five drops of 2% tincture of iodine to each quart of water. The Environmental Protection Agency advises adding 10 drops of iodine to cloudy or discolored water. Wait at least 30 minutes before using iodine-treated water. While it will be safe to drink, it may taste off.

Purification Tablets (Chlorine Dioxide)

Purification tablets can be purchased wherever camping supplies are sold. The active ingredients in these tablets are usually chlorine dioxide, iodine or chlorine. Chlorine dioxide is similar to household bleach in the way it disinfects. At high rates of consumption, it can damage the gastrointestinal tract and cause red blood cell damage, so it's important to carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions. The EPA recommends no more than 0.8 milligrams chlorine dioxide per liter of water. According to the CDC, 5% of water-treatment plants serving more than 100,000 people each in the U.S. utilize chlorine dioxide in their water treatment. It's estimated 12 million people in the U.S. are exposed to chlorine dioxide treated drinking water.

SUPPLY ROTATION

So, you drank juice for months to collect nice, thick BPA-free plastic 1-gallon jugs. You filled each sanitized jug with water and dutifully purified it with bleach, iodine or chlorine dioxide tablets. How long will these jugs last? If stored out of sunlight, in cool temperatures and in airtight containers, the CDC says the water is good for six months. You will find a lot of fluctuation on storage times depending on the source consulted. Utah's Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District states that commercially packaged, store-bought water will last about five years, but that home purified water should be rotated out annually.

CREATIVE SPOTS FOR STORING

With no garage or storage unit for the average apartment dweller, where can you store large supplies of water? After all, the Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends 1 gallon of water per day per person for three days to two weeks. So for two people, a two-week supply in 1-gallon jugs means 28 jugs.

Begin in your bedroom. Bottles with flat sides are easier to store than round ones. Screw lids on tightly, and cover the spout with a plastic bag secured with a rubber band. Place jugs on their sides inside plastic bags or plastic storage bins to catch leaks, then slide the bins under beds. Better yet, put your bed on risers to create more space beneath.

Remove closet rods and place a utility shelf unit inside. Most apartment buildings have rules against modifications, so you'll want a freestanding shelf unit.

Place a sturdy, narrow shelving unit against one wall in a hall. While this narrows the hallway, as long as you can get through, the rest of the space can be used to store water. Look for creative furniture alternatives: Can you store water beneath a table and use a long tablecloth to conceal it, or place a large crate over water bottles and use it as a coffee table? Do you have a vanity space under your bathroom sink? Instead of using it for other objects, store water there. You can conceal it with a curtain on a spring-loaded curtain rod.

Anticipate a leak situation and protect surfaces. Don't store water containers on concrete floors. The Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District warns that concrete has highly fluctuating temperatures and gives off moisture. Always place a platform of some material between water containers and the concrete below them for proper airflow.

DRINKER BEWARE

Even with treated water, it's still a good idea, conditions permitting, to boil the stored water before consumption. The CDC states, "Disinfectants can kill most harmful or disease-causing viruses and bacteria, but most disinfectants are not as effective as boiling for killing more resistant germs, such as the parasites cryptosporidium and giardia." Water exposed to fuel, radioactive materials or toxic chemicals cannot be disinfected or boiled to render it safe.

About the Author

Angeline Hawkes writes for Backwoods Survival Guide, Backwoods Home Magazine *and* Prepper Survival Guide, *among others. Visit her YouTube channel, Canterbury Trails Farm, at youtube.com/c/CanterburyTrailsFarm.*

PRIMARY HAZARDS IN UNTREATED SAMPLES

THESE PARASITES CAN MAKE A BAD DAY SO MUCH WORSE.

Cryptosporidium is the No. 1 cause of waterborne illness in people in the United States. This parasite infects humans and animals and brings on the diarrheal disease cryptosporidiosis. "Crypto," as it is known, is very resistant to chlorine disinfection. Symptoms set in within two days to a week after infection and can include watery diarrhea; abdominal cramps/pain; fever, nausea and/or vomiting; and ultimately dehydration from loss of body fluids. Illness can last for a few days to a few weeks and can be on and off again for up to 30 days.

Giardia is another common waterborne parasite that has the same symptoms as crypto. It's found in the feces of infected people or animals and it's transferred to soil, water and food. Pools, lakes, rivers and other recreational bodies of water are the leading modes of transfer for this germ. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate over 1 million people a year in the U.S. are infected with giardia. It can take up to two weeks for symptoms to manifest after infection. In addition to the same symptoms as crypto, intense gas and stools that float and appear greasy may also be present. In addition, look for increased fatigue, hives or itching skin and swollen joints and/or eyes.

PRECIOUS PAPERS

POST DISASTER REBOOT

BY JIM COBB

GATHER IMPORTANT RECORDS TOGETHER

A DISASTER BINDER CAN HELP GET YOU BACK UP AND RUNNING QUICKLY IN AN EMERGENCY. IF YOU FIND YOU NEED TO EVACUATE YOUR HOME, YOU PROBABLY WON'T HAVE TIME TO LEISURELY WALK THROUGH YOUR HOUSE, GATHERING ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS. YOU MAY BARELY HAVE TIME TO GET PROPERLY DRESSED BEFORE HITTING THE ROAD. WHILE ONE OF THE FIRST STEPS ON THE WAY TO PREPAREDNESS IS TO PUT TOGETHER A GOOD BUG-OUT BAG, ASSEMBLING A DISASTER BINDER RUNS A CLOSE SECOND IN IMPORTANCE.

EMERGENCY PLAN

The disaster binder sounds like a daunting project; but once it's complete, it's easy to maintain.

THE IDEA BEHIND THE disaster binder is to have one central location for records and documents that you may need during the recovery period following the crisis. As you'll see, it contains a good deal of private and sensitive information—so this isn't something you'll want to just have lying around. It might be wise to invest in a small portable fire safe where your disaster binder can be stored.

Every disaster binder is different and tailored to the individual or family. Take a look through the various proposed contents and choose the ones that apply best to you. Use a sturdy three-ring binder, page protectors and index tabs to keep things organized. And consider picking up some envelope-style page protectors to keep things from falling out.

VITAL RECORDS

If you lose your wallet, it may be difficult to prove your identity. This might prevent you from getting a hotel room or rental car. Immigration and naturalization paperwork is vital. If you are divorced, having proof of your child custody arrangements might be important in some situations. Unless otherwise noted, everything listed here should be represented in the disaster binder with copies, not originals.

✖ **Driver's License or State-Issued ID Cards** ✖ **Social Security Cards** ✖ **Military Records** (i.e., DD 214)

The importance of security cannot be overstated. Your disaster binder will contain personal information that could be used in nefarious ways. Keep it secure!

✖ **Immigration and Naturalization Paperwork** ✖ **Passports** (originals, not copies) ✖ **Child-Custody Orders or Agreements**

FINANCIAL RECORDS

Many of us already have our bank-account numbers memorized. Under stress, though, we sometimes forget information that would otherwise be easily recalled. Bear in mind too that part of the reason for the disaster binder is to help us more easily rebuild our lives if everything is lost. Knowing whom to contact and having the appropriate account numbers will speed things along quite a bit.

✖ **Bank Accounts** All account numbers and phone numbers for appropriate branch offices ✖ **Credit Cards** Photocopy the front and back of each card, which gives you the account numbers as well as the 800 numbers to call ✖ **Tax Returns** Photocopy the first two pages of last year's federal and state returns ✖ **Brokerage and Retirement Accounts** List of account numbers and person or office to contact ✖ **Investment Records** List of account numbers and person or office to contact

INSURANCE POLICIES

While insurance companies will do everything they can to locate the policies you have with them, it can make everyone's life much easier if you have the policy numbers with you. Make sure that you also have the appropriate phone numbers for your agent and the main office. Ask your agent for instructions on reporting claims and put that information in the binder.

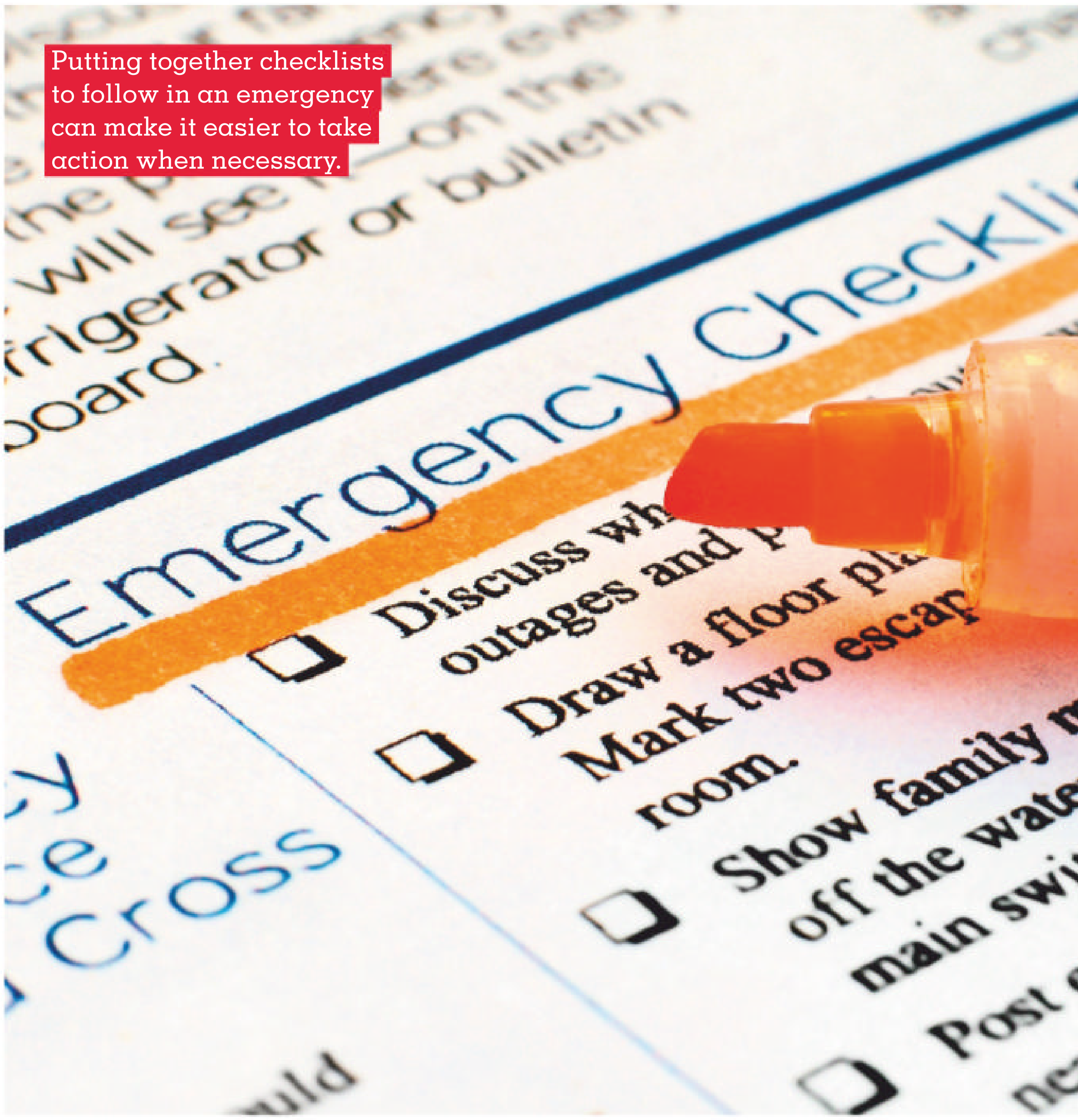
✖ **Homeowner or Renters** ✖ **Auto, Truck and/or Other Vehicle** ✖ **Life Insurance**

PROPERTY RECORDS

It might become necessary to provide proof that you own a specific vehicle or even your home. Put into the binder copies of deeds, mortgage agreements and vehicle titles.

✖ **Property Deed** ✖ **Mortgage Agreements** ✖ **Vehicle Titles**

IF YOU LOSE EVERYTHING IN THE DISASTER, THE BINDER WILL HELP YOU REBUILD.



Putting together checklists to follow in an emergency can make it easier to take action when necessary.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

While carrying around the complete medical histories for each member of your family might not be feasible, there is still some basic yet vital information to have in the binder. Having access to these records will certainly be of use to medical professionals who need to provide treatment without having the luxury of consulting your family doctor first.

✖ **Medical Insurance Cards** (copy front and back) ✖ **Name and Contact Information** for primary-care doctor ✖ **List of All Currently Prescribed Medications** for each family member ✖ **Name and Contact Information** for your usual pharmacy ✖ **Copies** of any advanced-care directives

Prepare a D
Supplies
Assemble su
members
, gas and elec
tches when necessary
emergency telephone numb
ar telephones.
children how and
police and fi

MISCELLANEOUS

There are a few other things that can help make life easier after an emergency. Consider the binder as your last backup for all the information that is vital to your family.

✖ **Contact List** All too often, we rely on our cellphone contact list instead of actually knowing phone numbers for our family and friends ✖ **Recent Photos of All Family Members** ✖ **Photo of You With Your Pet** If they become separated from you, a photo of you with Fido or Fluffy will go a long way toward proving ownership ✖ **Utility Companies** A list of account numbers and contact information for gas, electric and telephone providers will help get your service restored ✖ **Power of Attorney Paperwork** While originals are generally required, in a crisis, some banks and other institutions might accept good-quality photocopies

EVACUATION CHECKLIST

Something to consider is having a checklist in the binder of what absolutely needs to be done or grabbed in an evacuation. It shouldn't be anything elaborate or lengthy, since you probably won't have a lot of time. But having a checklist will help prevent forgetting anything vital.

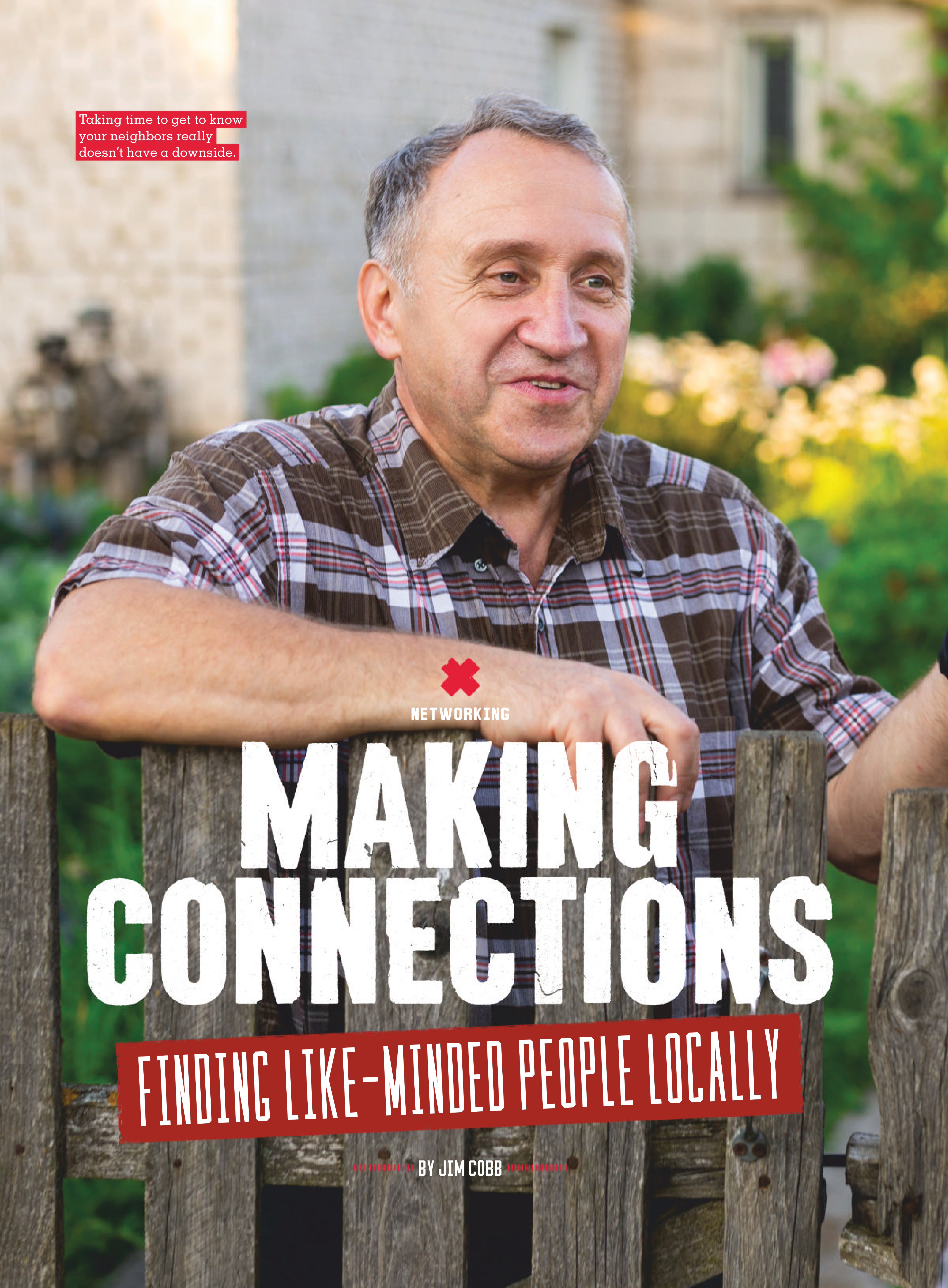
✖ **Turn off Water** ✖ **Turn off Gas** ✖ **Locate Pets and Get Them Into Vehicle** ✖ **Bug-Out Bags** ✖ **Wallets and Purses** ✖ **Keys for Vehicle and Home** ✖ **Disaster Binder** ✖ **Cash Reserves**

The disaster binder is a tool, nothing more. For some people, it could prove to be incredibly useful. It is a great way to keep important documents and records organized. Just remember, this is sensitive information and should be kept secure in some way.

FLASH DRIVES

Another way to store information is to use a password-protected flash drive. Scan in copies of all the important documents, keeping them organized into folders and subfolders. You can even set up multiple copies of the flash drive and store one at home, another at work and a third with a trusted family friend. Redundancy is never a bad idea.

The downside to this approach is that you'll need a computer to access the documents on the drive and a printer, if a hard copy is necessary. If you are standing at a roadblock outside your town and need to prove you live there to gain access to your neighborhood, handing the officer a flash drive probably isn't going to work as well as pulling out your binder with a copy of your driver's license.



Taking time to get to know your neighbors really doesn't have a downside.

NETWORKING

MAKING CONNECTIONS

FINDING LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE LOCALLY

BY JIM COBB

THERE'S A SAYING THAT GOES SOMETHING LIKE, "TEAMWORK IS WHAT MAKES THE DREAM WORK." THIS IS TRUE IN THE WORKPLACE AS WELL AS IN THE PREPPING WORLD. THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS TO BE HAD BY GETTING TOGETHER WITH OTHER PREPPERS IN YOUR AREA.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT networking with others in your immediate vicinity, some people feel we're talking about inviting strangers into your home and giving them a guided tour of your carefully curated supply stocks. Thus, they're understandably a little reluctant to jump on board.

But, that's not truly what we mean by networking. The idea here is simply to connect with others with whom you can do activities such as:

- **Brainstorm solutions** to prep-related problems, especially issues that are local.
- **Barter and trade things** like garden produce or excess supplies.
- **Share knowledge and teach** one another some needed skills.
- **Lend assistance** in a crisis, such as helping with damage cleanup.

Many preppers see the benefits of connecting with like-minded individuals in their area, but struggle with actually finding them. After all, one of the cardinal rules of prepping that gets drilled into our heads early on is that you should never let another human being know that you're a prepper.

But here's a reality check: This isn't some sort of super-secret society, complete with decoder rings and special handshakes. There is strength in numbers. Even if you don't take it as far as forming a survival community of sorts, just having people in your general area whom you can talk to and learn from is a valuable resource.

So, how do we go about finding other preppers in our neck of the woods? Here are a few ideas.

NEIGHBORS

The reality is that if a major disaster were to take place that affects your area, the people in your immediate vicinity are going to be in the same boat as you. I know, lots of people don't have neighbors they particularly like. But out of necessity in the wake of a crisis, you may find yourself teaming up with those you dislike. As the proverb goes, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

If you've not done so yet, make a point of getting to know your neighbors well. Invite them over for a BBQ in the summer and exchange cookies in December. Organize a floor party in your apartment building. Compliment the owner of the condo next door on their flower boxes. In today's society, we've become rather insular and closed off in our daily lives. This will be nothing but a hindrance in the future.

One way to approach the subject of prepping is to mention one of the many TV shows or movies that are survival-oriented, such as *The Walking Dead* or *Alone*. Or mention one of the public service announcements (PSAs) concerning emergency kits and the like that are broadcast regularly. Start a conversation and see where it leads.

COMMUNITY CLASSES

Many public libraries as well as park and recreation departments sponsor or host classes throughout the year. These are usually led by local people, sometimes those who own businesses that they're promoting. For example, a martial arts school might have a special class at the library on self-defense that meets once a week for six weeks. Or the county extension office might offer a Saturday morning class session on seed saving.

You can find these classes by inquiring with the library as well as your local recreation department. Often, these organizations will post

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

NOT EVERYONE WILL BE JOHN WICK.

Don't ever overlook a potential ally because of their physical condition, infirmities or other negatively perceived attributes. The 90-year-old widow who can hardly walk due to arthritis may have spent several decades of her life growing gardens and can share that knowledge with you. She may also have been the resident busybody and can tell you at a glance who lives where, how long they've lived there, what they do for a living and who has been shacking up with them. The asthmatic teenager might never win a footrace but may have enough gadget know-how to cobble together one heck of a communications system and could man it regularly.

classes on their respective websites. My local park and rec department sends out a flyer a few times each year with upcoming classes and activities detailed inside. Look for classes that teach skills related to self-reliant living, such as food preservation or gardening. You might even find one that's offered on emergency preparedness.

If you don't see classes on subjects that are of interest to you, the organizers of these sorts of programs are always looking for ideas. Maybe you could even volunteer to teach a class.

FARMERS MARKETS

By their very nature, homesteaders and farmers, especially small-scale ones, are sort of preppers by default. Some of them, in fact, many of them in my experience, have more than

Farmers markets are one place you're almost guaranteed to find others who are pursuing self-reliant lifestyles.

DON'T PUSH TOO HARD OR GO TOO FAST, OR YOU'RE GOING TO TURN PEOPLE AWAY.

a passing interest in actual emergency preparedness and similar topics. If you frequent farmers markets and become a regular for a few of the sellers, you can develop something of a rapport with them that might prove beneficial later.

GUN RANGES

It should go without saying that many preppers and survivalists are also firearms enthusiasts. The trick is finding those who are genuinely interested in prepping rather than just fantasizing about some sort of Mad Max existence. This might take a few conversations over time, but before long you'll learn which people are worth talking to further and which ones to avoid.

TAKE IT SLOW

One of the biggest mistakes people make in this sort of endeavor is to go too fast, too soon. If you go from zero to "the end of the world is just around the corner" in the first conversation, odds are you're going to lose them. While it can sometimes feel like we need to hurry up and get these relationships established, the truth is that slow and easy wins the race.

Gun ranges are often filled with people who are interested in prepping to one degree or another.

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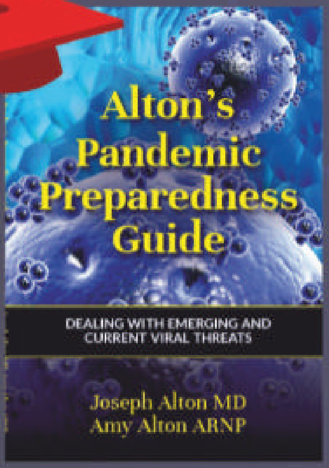
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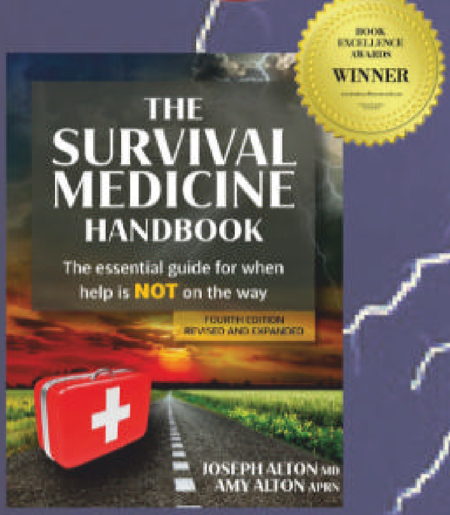
Amy Alton ARNP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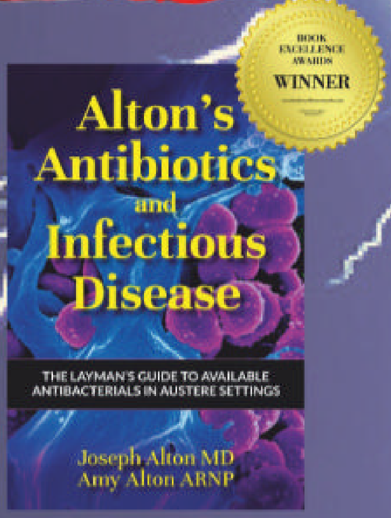
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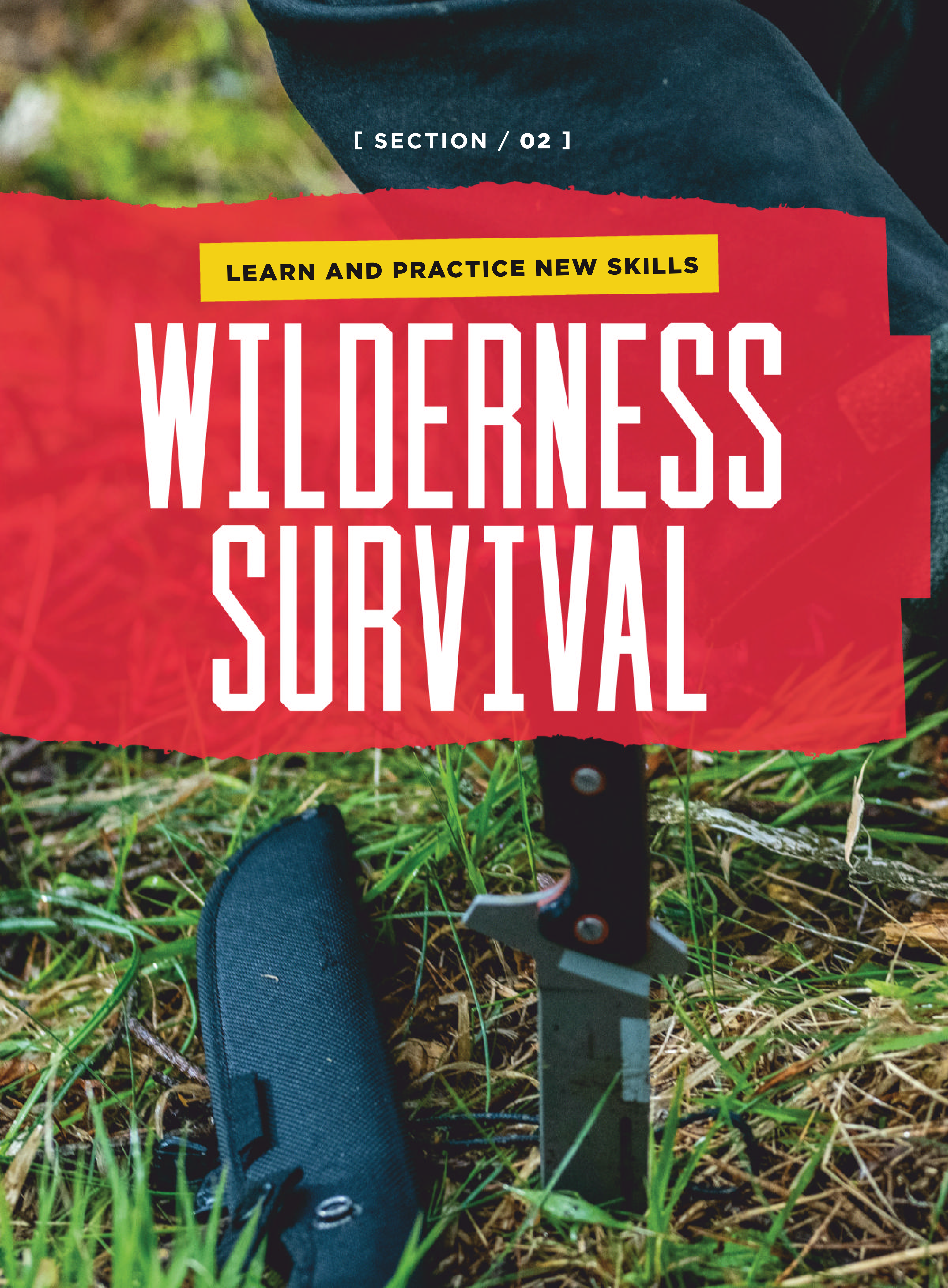

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LEARN AND PRACTICE NEW SKILLS

WILDERNESS SURVIVAL

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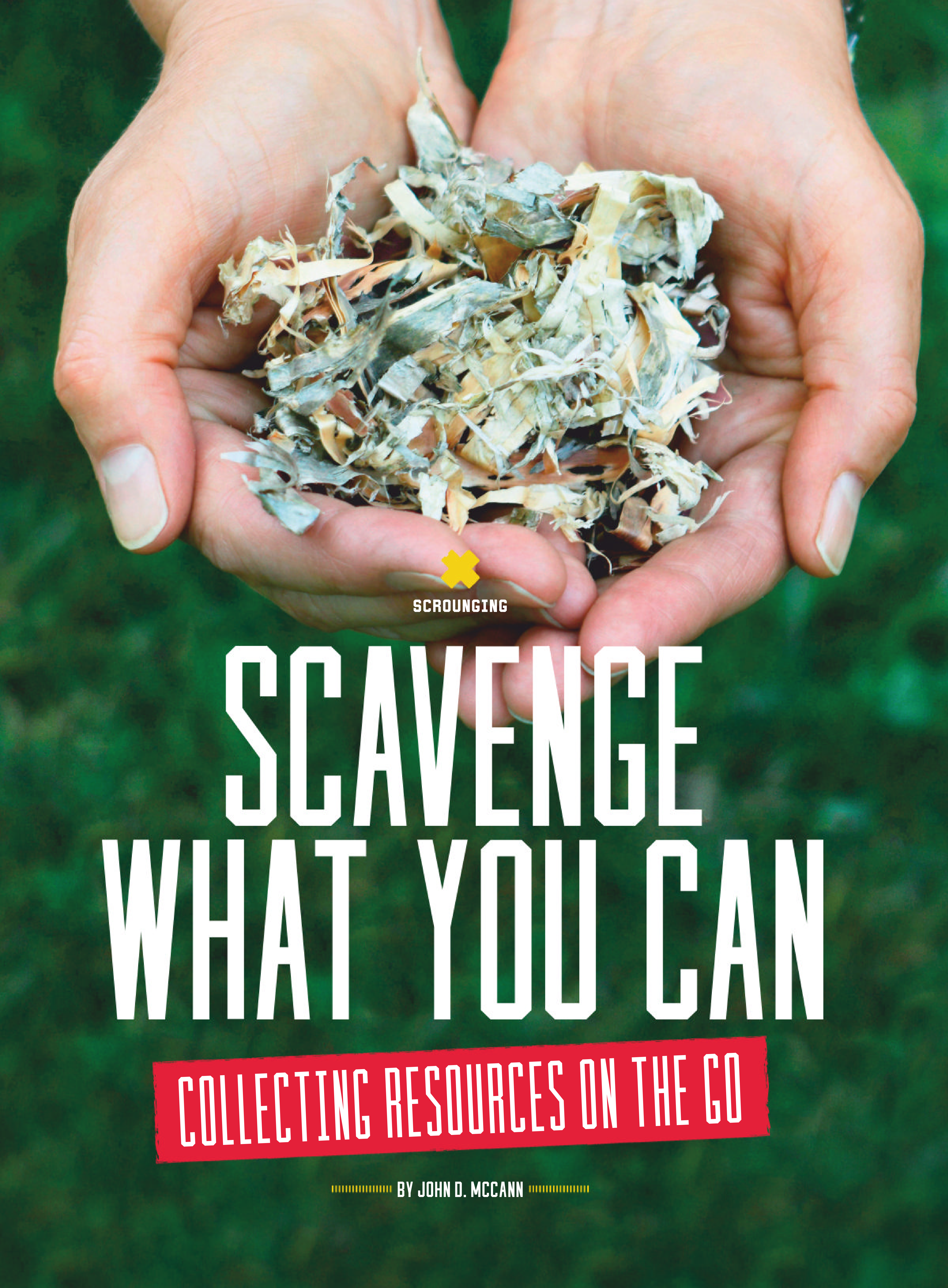


SCROUNGING

SCAVENGE WHAT YOU CAN

COLLECTING RESOURCES ON THE GO

BY JOHN D. MCCANN

Birch bark is a great tinder material.

Harvesting natural tinder materials like birch bark, dried grass or plant fluff allows you to conserve your packed tinder for later use.

OFTEN, WHEN WE ARE OUT IN THE WOODS, WE CAN'T FIND SPECIFIC RESOURCES WHEN WE WANT OR NEED THEM. FOR THIS REASON, I ALWAYS RECOMMEND THAT YOU REMAIN ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THINGS THAT YOU MAY NOT NEED NOW, BUT THAT MIGHT COME IN HANDY LATER. MY MANTRA: GRAB IT WHEN YOU FIND IT SO YOU HAVE IT WHEN YOU NEED IT. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IF YOU ARE IN SURVIVAL MODE.

WATER

Hydration is essential to survival. Even if you carry water on you, it won't last forever. If you find a source of H2O along the way, it would be wise to supplement what you have. However, you should have some way to purify it: Most water found in the wilderness should be considered contaminated with at least one of the four waterborne enteric pathogens (bacteria, viruses, protozoan cysts and parasites).

I recommend a stainless steel bottle for carrying—it allows you to boil water right in the bottle for purification. However,

Always have a way to carry water and to make it safe to drink.

Potable Aqua

Water is essential to survival—so grab it when you can. Here, the author is filtering water directly from a wilderness stream using a Katadyn Hiker Pro filter.

Cattail

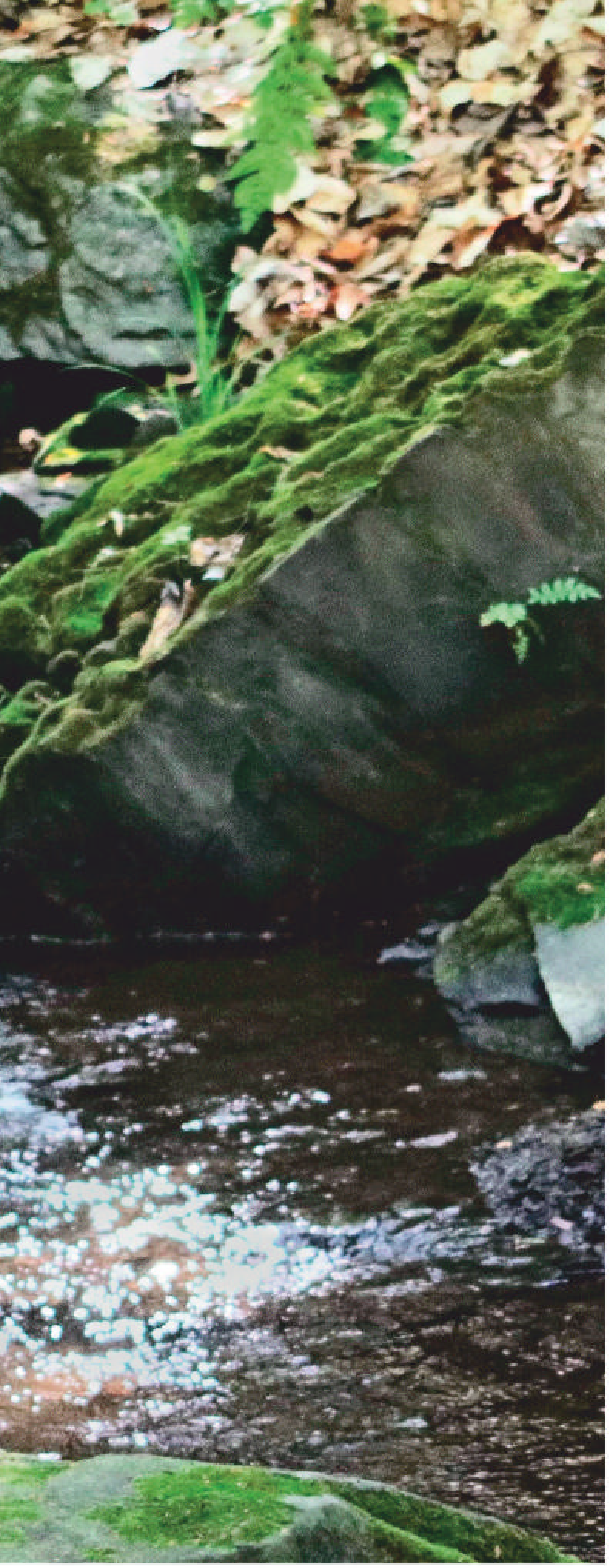
you should also carry a water filter. They come in various sizes so you should be able to find one that accommodates the size of your kit. Filters make quick work of obtaining water out of a wilderness source.

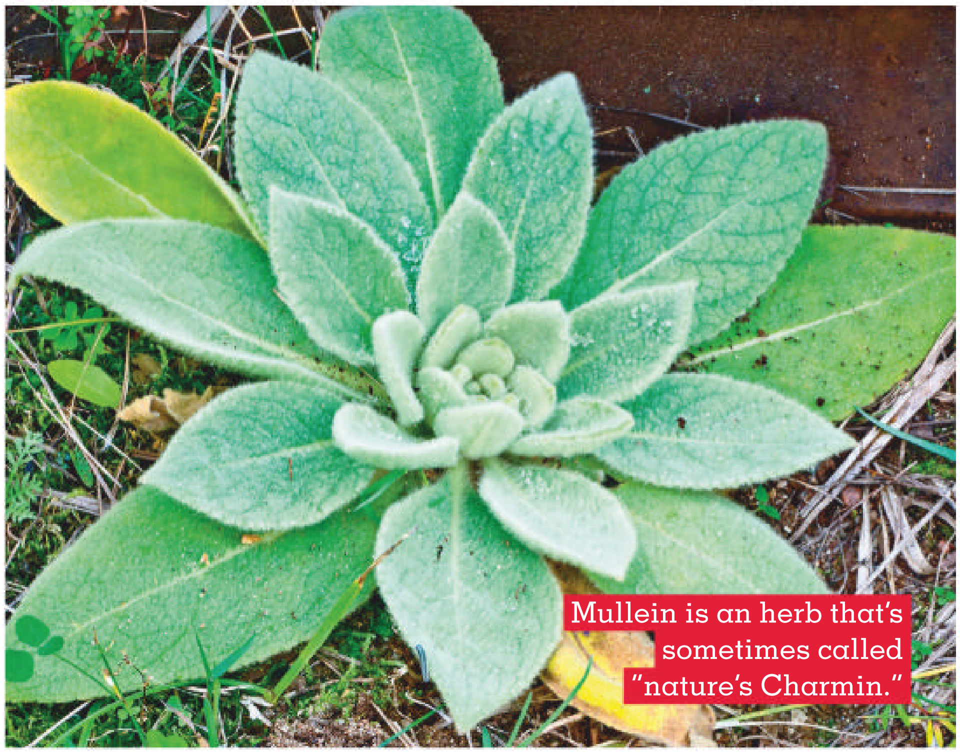
If you carry a secondary container, like an Aqua-Pouch or some other type of flexible flask, it would be wise to carry some water-purification tablets, such as chlorine dioxide, and some type of a pre-filter, which could even be a bandanna. These tablets take several hours to work, so you could put the water in the secondary container and let the tablets do their job while you're on the go.

TINDER

Fire is an important aspect of any survival situation. It not only provides heat to warm your body or to dry wet clothes, but can also provide light, boil water for purification, generate smoke for signaling your position and allow for cooking in order to make food palatable and safe to eat. An often overlooked benefit of fire is a sense of companionship, a friend in the dark that repels the noises of the night.

In order to start a fire you need tinder, kindling and fuel. Usually you can easily find kindling and fuel, but sometimes you have to keep your eyes open for decent tinder. Although some people carry tinder or fire starters in their kit, it never hurts to grab some if you see it so you can conserve what you have.





Mullein is an herb that's sometimes called "nature's Charmin."

When you stop for a break from hiking, glance around for natural tinder material and, if you find some, stash it in a bag in your pack so you have it when you need it.

Keep a stash of empty plastic bags in your pack. Use them to store your scrounged materials, like this natural toilet paper, for later use.

There are many natural tinder options in the field—but they're not everywhere. Be on the lookout for various barks such as paper (white) birch, river birch, red cedar, tulip poplar and my favorite, yellow (curly) birch, to name a few. Many barks are easy to process for use as tinder. You can also use the seed down from plants such as cattail and milkweed. Dried grasses such as phragmites (reed) also make good tinder when found in late winter and early spring.

Another type of tinder that can be found is the resinous wood from pine or other sappy conifers. Sometimes called fatwood, it is made from the heartwood of pines that are naturally saturated with dried resin, also called pitch. This wood often comes from stumps of trees that died standing. Under the right conditions after a pine tree dies, the heartwood will fill up with resin, which eventually crystallizes and hardens, while remaining very flammable.

BEING ABLE TO LIGHT A WARM FIRE ON A COLD, DARK NIGHT CAN BRING A LOT OF COMFORT.

Steep finely chopped white pine needles in hot water for a cup of nutritious tea that's high in vitamin C.

PLANTS

Some plants have medicinal qualities, some are edible and others can be used for various purposes, such as making cordage. Of course, it would take an entire book to describe all the types of plants that can be used in the field.

Common mullein is a biennial plant: The first year it has a low rosette of leaves; the second year it sends up a stout stalk topped with yellow flowers. Although mullein does have medicinal uses, it's best known as "nature's Charmin," thanks to its large, woolly, gray-green leaves that are very soft. When you come across this plant, grab some of the larger leaves, fold or roll them up and stick them in your pocket or pack. That way, when nature inevitably calls, you will have emergency toilet paper at the ready.

Many edible plants can be found in the wilderness, but it's crucial to learn how to identify them before you need them. Take a class with a reputable teacher and always be sure that you can definitely identify a plant before you consume it.

Some trees are relatively easy to identify and can be used to make a tea that can provide a high amount of vitamin C. Most pine trees can be used for pine needle tea, but not all. Some are poisonous or toxic, such as lodgepole pine, Monterey pine, Ponderosa pine, Norfolk pine (Australian pine), loblolly pine, common juniper and—although not a pine—yew. However, two that are easily identified are white pine and Eastern hemlock, which are good options for making tea.

White pine has five needles in each bundle, called a fascicle. Collecting the needles for tea is easy and you don't have to damage the tree limbs to do so. Simply place your hand loosely around a small section of limb and slide it down, gently stripping off a handful of needles.

Eastern hemlock has needles that are flat and attached individually to the branch. They have two very distinct, creamy-white bands running the length of the underside of the needle and are rarely more than a half-inch long.

Once you have collected the needles, chop them into small pieces and place them in a cup that can be heated, such as a metal coffee cup. Pour boiling water over the needles, then let it steep for about 10 minutes. You will have a healthy and tasty warm drink that is high in vitamin C.

Milkweed

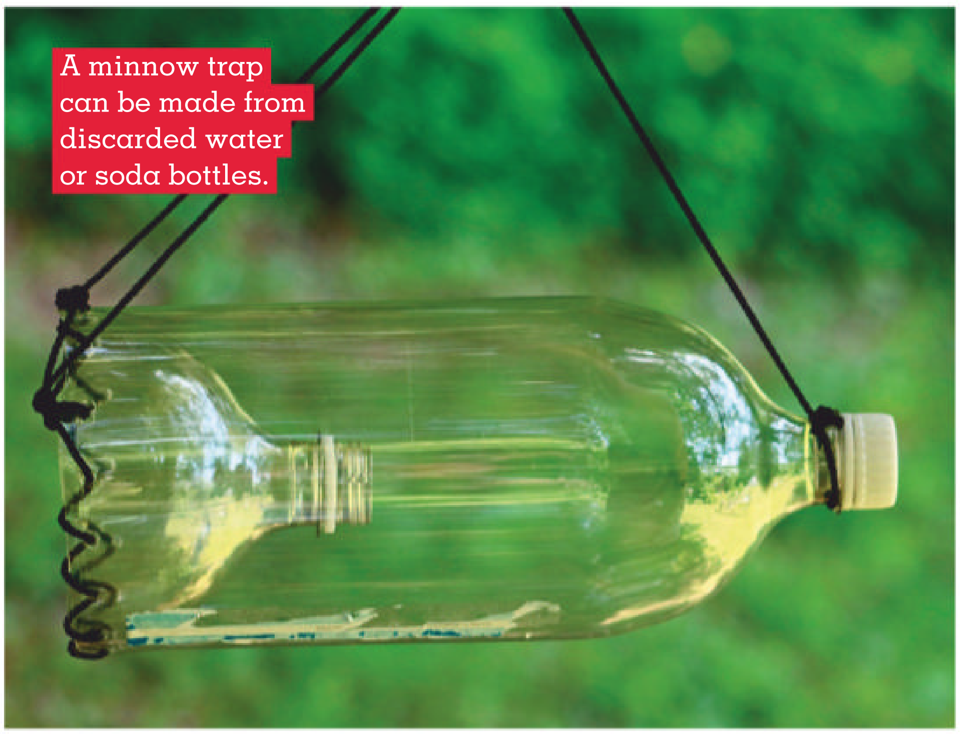
TRASH

I'm sure that you've seen all kinds of discarded garbage while hiking in the wilderness. But you know the old saying: One man's trash is another person's treasure. Take discarded plastic water or soda bottles. They have a wide variety of uses, such as boiling water by hanging the bottle over, but not in, a fire. They can also be used to make fish traps (see photo, below). Plastic water or soda bottles can also be used to make cordage, which can then be used to build a shelter or as other construction materials.

As you can see, there are plenty of resources in the wilderness that you can use to help you survive, or extend those supplies that you carry. Stay alert, and grab them when you find them.

About the Author *John D. McCann is the owner of Survival Resources, specializing in quality survival gear. Find him at survivalresources.com.*

Careless campers and hikers always leave behind bottles and other trash that could be scrounged.



A minnow trap can be made from discarded water or soda bottles.

PACK SOME CONTAINERS

THEY ALLOW YOU TO MAKE BETTER USE OF THE MATERIALS YOU FIND.

Collecting any resources is much easier when you actually have something to collect them in until you need them! I recommend that you carry some type of container that can be used in addition to your pockets or pack, just for foraging. They don't have to be large, but they should provide you with some extra room to carry those items you find or are collecting. The container can be as simple as a small mesh bag that doesn't take up much room when folded up. Even a few small garbage bags can be rolled up and kept in your pack. Some people carry a small leather pouch that can be slung over a shoulder or worn on a belt. I carry a small waxed canvas forager's belt pouch, which can be opened, providing plenty of room for resources. (Visit survivalresources.com to find these and other smart, helpful items.)

A forager's belt pouch comes in handy.

Small bags and pouches are useful.

GET OVER IT

THE MUDDY WORLD OF OBSTACLE RACING

BY SEAN ELLIS

WE STOOD TOGETHER IN A DARK ROOM, WAITING FOR A SIGNAL. WHAT THAT WOULD BE, EXACTLY, WE WEREN'T SURE, BUT WHEN IT CAME, WE KNEW JUST WHAT TO DO.... RUN!

Y... A POR TODAS

Some courses are solo, others encourage teamwork.

SUDDENLY, A LOUD explosion ripped through the air. The doors burst open and the stampede began. After the dark room, it took my eyes a moment to adjust, but I could see well enough to get moving. Urged on by shouts of "Go! Go!" with more blasts showering debris all around, I pounded down the dirt road. I knew better than to exhaust myself by sprinting, so I settled into a measured jog, dropping to the back of the group.

Ahead a column of smoke lofted skyward, and I soon found myself running through the blasted ruins of an old gas station where I had to dodge burning cars, clamber over piles of rubble and old tires, climb up into a derelict school bus, and even leap through the flames that blocked the escape route.

Over the next couple of hours, I would have to test my knife-throwing skills, cover myself in mud, move through an embattled urban landscape under fire, transport water using a condom, submerge myself entirely in frigid water, start a fire using a knife and ferro rod, and eat bugs (on purpose!).

No, I wasn't in a war zone. Not a real one anyway. I was at the Blue Cloud Movie Ranch in Santa Clarita, California—if you've seen *Iron Man* or *American Sniper*, then you've seen Blue Cloud—along with hundreds of other crazy people who had signed up for the Bear Grylls Survival Challenge, an endurance/

FRIENDLY COMPETITION IS ALWAYS ENCOURAGED.

These races require endurance and mental fortitude, as well as the ability to have fun.

obstacle race with some added complexity and a lot of movie magic thrown in to enhance the experience.

Yes, I actually paid money to put myself through that. And I'd do it again.

Obstacle races like the BGSC are nothing new, but they have become immensely popular over the last couple of decades. Many people, even those who would not consider themselves athletes, are drawn to O-racing because of the wide variety of experiences offered.

WHAT IS OBSTACLE RACING?

As the name implies, an obstacle race is a footrace where the course includes a variety of challenges that must be overcome. Many of these will be familiar to anyone who has ever received military training—climbing over walls and up cargo nets, crawling through mud under barbed wire, horizontal ladder crossings (monkey bars), rope swings and the like. Several races also include mental challenges. And most of them have a big water slide at the end for a thrilling finish.

Military obstacle courses, often called confidence courses, are designed to test a soldier's ability to negotiate the kind of terrain that might be encountered on the battlefield. It's not just a matter of cardio endurance or even raw strength. A soldier has to be able to move in three dimensions, across unpredictable or slippery surfaces, scale walls and ladders, ignore extreme heights, and generally get past a natural dislike of being dirty, wet and uncomfortable.

Aside from the military, law enforcement and emergency services, there are very few professions where one is likely to encounter such a range of circumstances, and yet any one of us might find ourselves in a situation where your life might depend on being able to do more than just run. Obstacle racing can be a great way to extend your physical fitness regimen and build confidence in your ability to handle any challenge.

OFF TO THE RACES

The Bear Grylls Survival Challenge was held in April 2018 and appears to have been a one-off event, but odds are good that there's a mud run or obstacle race coming to your area. The big national outfits like Spartan Race, Tough Mudder and Rugged Maniac have events all over the U.S. and Canada, and are usually scheduled more than a year in advance, giving you plenty of time to make arrangements. Additionally, many local race organizers are providing unique and challenging terrain races. A quick internet search of "obstacle races near me" or "mud runs near me" will probably give you plenty of options, as well as a timeline for training.

Proper footwear is an absolute must.

You can find these sorts of races all over the country. Some of the larger outfits will sponsor multiple events each year in different locations.

Some degree of brute strength may be necessary for certain obstacles.

GETTING STARTED

An obstacle race will require you to work outside your normal range of proficiencies. Most people, even die-hard gym rats, don't make a habit of scrambling over walls, leaping smaller hurdles or crawling through mud. Many first-timers don't know what to expect, and so don't really do much to train for the unique challenges they will face. Nevertheless, if you're thinking about signing up for an event like this, there are some things you can do to prepare for whatever the course throws at you.

IT IS WISE TO GET A PHYSICAL FROM YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE ATTEMPTING ONE OF THESE COURSES.

Thanks in no small part to the increasing popularity of these events, many sports clubs and climbing gyms are now offering obstacle training and ropes courses for their clientele.

If you don't have a business like that in your area, it's still possible to get yourself mentally and physically ready. In his book *Ultimate Obstacle Race Training*, veteran racer and professional course designer Brett Stewart focuses on three key areas of training: strength, speed and endurance, and dexterity.

The first two areas can be improved with a general fitness workout. As always, consult your physician before starting a new exercise routine. Many races will feature some kind of heavy object drag challenge, so core and leg strength will be important. You can practice dragging a sandbag or tractor tire in the backyard to train those muscles. Spartan Races usually include a bucket carry over a distance of 200-400 yards. You can train for that with a five-gallon bucket weighted with sand or gravel. Start with an amount that's comfortable, then add more sand until you get to 75 pounds—the goal weight for the event.

Speed and endurance can be improved through interval training, but trail running is going to better prepare you for moving on uneven surfaces and may even provide you with a few natural obstacles to leap over.

Improving dexterity can be a bit more challenging. "Every obstacle that requires you to haul your ass over, under or through it will undoubtedly require upper-body strength, coordination and momentum employed in conjunction," Stewart writes. Figuring out how to do this requires practice, as well as some training aids.

If you have space at home and enjoy DIY projects, you can build your own vertical walls, rope climbing stations and cargo net ladders. If turning the backyard into your own little O-course isn't an option, a playground is a great place to practice many of the moves that you will need to master, such as wall climbs and jumps. Just plan your training visits to avoid having to compete with kids for the equipment.

NEXT-LEVEL FIT

Most O-races are entry level "sprint" distance events—usually no more than a 5K (3.1-mile) course with a dozen or so obstacles—but there are plenty of opportunities to test yourself even further. Spartan Race offers the Beast (21K, 30 obstacles) and Ultra (50K, 60 obstacles). For a challenge with more of a military-style flavor, check out Go Ruck, which offers "an event, not a race" along with a warrior-ethos-based fitness challenge modeled on Special Forces selection.

Getting and staying fit is an essential component of survival preparation. Fortunately, it can also be a lot of fun.

About the Author

Sean Ellis is an action-adventure novelist with more than 30 published books. Learn more about Sean at seanellisauthor.com.

KAZDEGO DNIA BLIZEJ CELU!
SURVIVAL RACE

While there is some level of competition, most participants want to see everyone succeed.

GEARING UP

EQUIPMENT YOU'LL WANT.

You don't really need any specialized supplies to run an obstacle race or mud run, but you may want to give some thought to your apparel and footwear before you ruin your favorite gear. You're going to be leaping, sliding and crawling through gritty mud, so skip your standard 5K run attire. You want durable, tight-fitting garments that will shed moisture quickly and not snag easily. Avoid cotton as it will hold onto moisture and generally make you miserable.

Essentials

- **Top** You'll see a lot of buff guys going shirtless in these races, but the right shirt will give you added protection from the elements and the obstacles. A long-sleeved compression shirt (e.g., Under Armour) is always a good choice.
- **Bottom** Compression shorts or running tights will give you freedom of movement and keep the mud out of places where you definitely don't want it.
- **Socks** Knee-high compression socks will protect your lower legs, especially if you wear shorts. Consider wearing two pairs of socks if you're worried about getting blisters.
- **Shoes** Trail running shoes have better traction for some extra grip, which will be especially helpful when climbing. Many outdoor shoemakers are creating shoes specifically for obstacle races.

Optional

- **Gloves** Fingerless gloves with extra padding in the palms will help with rope climbing, but make sure the fabric is water-resistant.
- **Leg Guards** Gaiters or shin-guards will give some protection on the course, especially if you'll be running through thorny underbrush.
- **Sunglasses** These protect you from the sun as well as offer some protection against mud and grit, but scratched lenses are a possibility.
- **Hydration Belt** Most races will provide water on the course, but you may want to supplement it by bringing your own. A hydration belt with a small bottle is better than a backpack hydration bladder.

A long-sleeved compression shirt offers protection.

Fire making isn't just fun, it can be vital to survival.

LEARN BY DOING

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

KNOWLEDGE WEIGHS NOTHING AND CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

BY JOSHUA RAINES

THE DEBATE OFTEN BANDIED ABOUT ON SURVIVAL-RELATED SOCIAL MEDIA IS HOW TO RANK THE IMPORTANCE OF SKILLS VERSUS STUFF. WHICH ONE IS MORE CRITICAL: THE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO PERFORM BASIC TASKS OR HAVING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES THAT WOULD MAKE LIFE MORE COMFORTABLE?

STUFF CAN MAKE SKILLS easier to implement, no question about it. It is important to understand how to use the two together in order to efficiently accomplish your objectives in the field.

While there are a number of skill sets that fall under the survival umbrella, a few of them are perhaps a bit more important than others.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Simply put, this means paying close attention to the world around you. Keeping your eyes open and your head on a swivel allows you to better see potential threats coming your way, and that's applicable in all environments, from urban cityscapes to places far off the beaten path.

Nobody is suggesting you turn yourself into the next Jason Bourne, of course, but working on your observational abilities is a smart idea. The earlier you can recognize a potential problem, the more time you'll have to react and respond accordingly.

There are two stages or steps involved with this.

First, you need to notice something is amiss. This requires you to hone your observation abilities. Second, you need to be able to quickly interpret the data you're receiving from your senses and act accordingly. It isn't enough to just see a guy running through the store. You need to process the information and then react as needed, whether that means taking cover from an active shooter or simply stepping aside.

SCHOOLS TO CONSIDER

WHERE TO FIND FORMAL EDUCATION IN SURVIVAL SKILLS

If you want to go beyond YouTube University and get some face-time with real instructors, there are several schools scattered throughout the United States where you can do just that. Here are just a few of them. Check out their websites or send them an e-mail to find out what classes they have on tap.

✖ **Nature Reliance School (Kentucky)**
NatureReliance.org
Info@naturereliance.org

✖ **Campcraft Outdoors (Kentucky)**
CampcraftOutdoors.com
Jason@campcraft.us

✖ **Advanced Survival Training (Virginia)**
AdvancedSurvivalTraining.com
Tim@advancedsurvivaltraining.com

✖ **School of Self-Reliance (California)**
ChristopherNyerges.com
Christopher_Nyerges@yahoo.com

EXERCISE #1

✖ **Urban Observations**

People-watching is a great way to strengthen your situational awareness. Pick a place where you can hang around for a couple of hours without looking like a stalker, such as a shopping mall. Pay close attention to those who walk by. Do certain people stick out from the crowd? What made you notice them? While appearance—such as odd clothing—might be part of it, more often than not it's their movements and behavior that catch the eye. Pay attention to someone who is moving much faster than the crowd. Why are they in a hurry? It is also worth noting how many people pass by seemingly oblivious to what's happening around them. Don't emulate those folks.

EXERCISE #2

✖ **Nature Observations**

Head out into a local county park or state forest. Find a comfortable spot to sit and relax. Let the sights and sounds come to you. Watch and listen for movement. Look at the trees around you. See any nests? How about dead branches that might come down in the next storm?

Come back to that same spot on a regular basis—weekly, if you can swing it. Bring a notebook and jot down your observations. See how the area changes throughout the year, not just in appearance but in wildlife traffic. The whole point here is to notice details that casual observers might miss. Doing so will become habit with enough time and practice.

FIRE MAKING

This is one of the most vital skills in the survival arena. Fire will keep you warm, boil water for disinfection and light up the night. It can also be a strong psychological benefit as it gives you a bit of control over your situation. You might be lost and hungry, but you can at least make a fire and tend to it. This can help improve morale and raise spirits.

Every fire needs three things to live: heat or spark, fuel and oxygen. The prudent survivalist keeps at least a few different fire-lighting tools with them every time they venture out. These might include disposable lighters, ferrocerium rods, or a Fresnel lens. Don't overlook keeping tinder in a waterproof container.

One of the most common mistakes with fire building is adding too much fuel too quickly and smothering the fire before it gets going. Take it slow. Let the fire breathe. Keep in mind that lighting the tinder is usually the easy part. Feeding the fire gradually and helping it grow takes time and patience.

This is one of the easiest skills to practice and hone because you can do it right in your own backyard.

EXERCISE #1

✖ **Expand Your Horizons**

Most people, if push comes to shove, can make at least a serious attempt using a lighter or matches. It gets harder when you try tools like a ferro rod or even more primitive methods. That's exactly why you should

Take a journal with you into the field and make notes on your progress with practicing skills.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO DITCH THE GPS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS AND TRY RELYING ON A PAPER MAP.

THESE SKILLS CAN BE PRACTICED ANYWHERE, NOT JUST IN A REMOTE FOREST OFF THE BEATEN PATH.

practice with them. Learn through experience what works best for you and what doesn't. Play around with different types of tinder, too, and see which fire-starting tools work better with each one.

EXERCISE #2

Freeze Your Hands

Well, maybe not literally, but the more challenging you can make it on yourself while still being successful, the more experience and confidence you'll gain. Gather your materials, then soak your hands in ice water for at least a few minutes. Once they're sufficiently numb, make your fire. You'll be clumsy and anything other than gross motor movements will be difficult at best. Keep at it. Practice won't make your hands operate better when they're cold and numb, but that's not the point. The idea is to understand what your hands will and will not be able to do so that you can discover ways to still get things done.

Reading a map isn't difficult but you first need to be able to figure out where you are on it.

NAVIGATION

Even the most experienced hikers and campers can veer from the trail and find themselves in a bad situation. The rule is that the moment you realize you're lost, stop where you are and make an assessment. If more people did that, search and rescue teams would be able to stay home more often.

Learning basic navigation can help prevent you from getting too far afield. Straying from an established trail is OK from time to time, provided you know how to get back to it.

There is a lot to know when it comes to this area of knowledge, such as terms like declination and azimuth. It isn't something you'll be able to pick up just through watching a couple of quick

videos online. However, the basics are fairly easy to learn. In most real-world situations, you just need to be able to figure out approximately where you are and which direction you need to travel to find help.

The two primary tools are a map and a compass. By themselves, they aren't nearly as helpful as they are when used together. Using a compass to find north is nothing more than a cool piece of trivia without a map to provide some sort of context. On the other hand, a map is only an interesting piece of modern art unless you can orient it properly.

EXERCISE #1

✖ Map Reading

Plot a route on a paper map, then go out and follow it. Practice finding landmarks on the map and locating them in real life. Whether this is a journey on foot or by vehicle, it should be to a destination new to you. Keep it simple and easy the first few times, then increase the distance and difficulty.

EXERCISE #2

✖ Use Nature's Cues

While that old saw about moss only growing on the north side of a tree is an easily debunked myth, nature can help when you're trying to determine compass direction. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west, right?

In the Northern Hemisphere, trees often grow more branches on their southern-facing side. The branches on the north side tend to grow upward while the ones on the southern side grow outward. This is easiest to see if you're standing directly under the tree and looking up its trunk.

In an urban area, a similar observation can be made by looking for satellite TV dishes on the sides of buildings. North of the equator, those dishes almost always face south. Why? Because the satellites stick near the equator.

Make it a habit to observe these sorts of natural clues and compare them to a compass when you're out in the field.

About the Author *Joshua Raines has been tramping through forests practically since he was old enough to walk. He enjoys trying out new innovations with gear and technology as well as getting back in touch with his roots and the traditions of those who came before.*

No matter how skilled you think you are, always let someone else know when you're headed out to commune with Mother Nature, just in case things go awry.

[SECTION / 03]

BE READY TO EVACUATE, JUST IN CASE

BUG-OUT PLANNING

FACT VS.
FICTION

KEEPING IT REAL

MAKE PLANS THAT MAKE SENSE

BY JIM COBB

LET'S SAY A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY OR A POLICE OFFICER KNOCKED ON YOUR DOOR IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS AND SAID THERE WAS AN EMERGENCY SITUATION REQUIRING YOU TO EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY. HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TO GET OUT THE DOOR? DON'T FORGET YOUR PETS, EITHER.

One of your goals is to get out ahead of the crowd so you can avoid traffic jams.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT location you'll go to? How will you get there?

The reality is that in the vast majority of likely scenarios, emergency evacuation won't mean you'll be running off to the forest. You're not leaving home forever; you're just trying to get away from a dangerous or potentially dangerous situation. In fact, odds are pretty good you'll be coming back home within a day or two in most cases.

There is perhaps no other subject that is more steeped in fiction and fantasy than bugging out. Let's take a look at realistic bug-out planning.

TYPES OF EVACUATION

In many bug-out scenarios, you're going to have at least a little advance warning. For example, if a wildfire is headed your way, chances are you'll know it is coming, provided you pay attention to local news and alerts. Hurricanes don't just swirl up out of nowhere. We usually have several days where we're watching it slowly work its way toward landfall.

Unless you've been completely ignoring all local and regional news, you'll know what's happening and you'll have time to react as you see fit. It may only be a few hours, but at least you'll have a heads-up.

So what about a situation in which you'd have to take off at a moment's notice? These would be things

Having a bag packed and stashed in the closet saves time.

like a chemical spill in the immediate area or a fire at a local factory. In each case, toxic fumes would spew into the air. You may receive word that you need to get out of the area right away. You're probably only going to be gone a few hours, maybe overnight at best.

Now, I suppose one could argue that there's a third type of evacuation, and that's more of a permanent move. In the wake of a major disaster—we're talking total devastation types of scenarios—it might become necessary to evacuate the area and move on to somewhere a little less messy. However, prepping for that kind of situation will require a lot more than just a bug-out bag and some luck, and thus isn't really within the scope of a simple magazine article.

> **MOST BUG-OUT SCENARIOS ARE TEMPORARY AND YOU'LL BE BACK HOME WITHIN A FEW DAYS OR SO.**

In some unfortunate cases, there may not be a home when you return.

THIS ISN'T A MOVIE

PLANNING TO HEAD FOR THE WILDERNESS ISN'T A PLAN.

Time and again, we see or hear people discussing bugging out to the woods, planning to live off the land. This just isn't realistic for most people, particularly a lot of the ones who insist that's the best option. Wilderness living is tough in the best of times, let alone when challenging conditions are working against you.

Consider this: If you have a plan to head for the hills in a crisis but you're not sure what you need to pack in your bug-out bag, you might not be as prepared to survive in the wild as you think. Those who have put in the endless hours practicing those skills to such a degree that they can reliably use them to survive for days on end not only know what to carry, they already have things ready to go.

BUG-OUT BAGS

No matter where you live and what sorts of risks you might face in terms of causing the need for evacuation, it is a good idea to assemble an evac kit, commonly known in the prepper world as a bug-out bag. Keep it in a closet or other easily accessible area until it is needed. Think along the lines of a weekend getaway rather than fleeing to the hills. Here are some content recommendations.

- **Full change of clothing**, with at least two changes of socks and underwear.

- **Small toiletry kit** (toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, deodorant, razor, shaving cream).

- **Cash—**ideally enough for at least two nights at a motel and a few meals, plus one to two tanks of gas (this is primarily in case computer systems are down and businesses go to cash-only transactions).

- **Snacks—**just a few things to tide you over, along with a couple of bottles of water.

- **Prescription medications** for each member of the family who requires them. Enough for at least a week.

- **Important documents**. Have copies of your identification, insurance policies, vehicle ownership, home ownership and similar records on a password-protected thumb drive.

- **A battery bank** with a cord to charge your phone. A wall charger isn't a bad idea, either.

- **List of important phone numbers**, in case your phone is unavailable.

- **A flashlight** or two with spare batteries.

- **Small first-aid kit**, including stomach remedies and cold and flu meds.

- **If you have pets**, their food, dishes for food and water, and any needed meds.

- **Paper maps** where you can see your planned evacuation routes.

While setting up a bag for each member of the family is ideal, you don't need to repeat all of the contents in each bag. Use common sense and good judgement to decide what to include in each one. For young children, consider several pairs of undergarments in case of accidents as well as a small toy and other distractions to help ease anxiety.

TRANSPORTATION

A common theme in prepper fiction is what we might call the survivalist's journey home. The hero of the piece is away on business when disaster strikes, often an electromagnetic pulse (EMP), leaving them stranded hundreds of miles from their loved ones. The bulk of the story is their trek back, often on foot, while they encounter any number of difficulties ranging from bad weather to murderous gangs.

That all makes for riveting novels and movies, no question about it. However, the reality might be a little different. Studies have shown that many if not most vehicles will run just fine after an EMP. They might shut down when the EMP occurs, but they'll start back up again when you turn the key. Fuel accessibility might be a different story, of course, but let's at least put aside the notion that all of these cars and trucks will suddenly become nothing more than roadblocks.

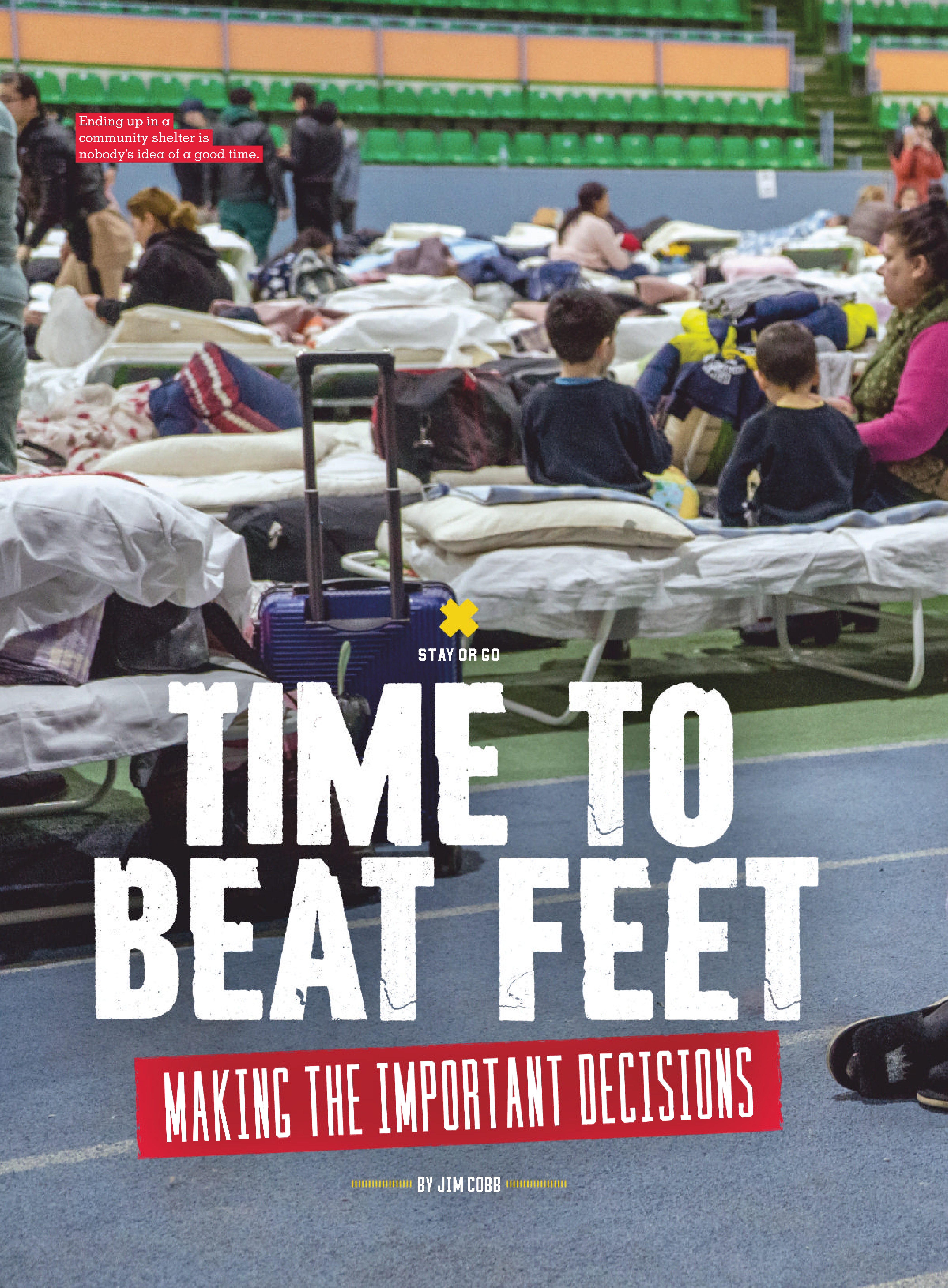
Another, at least tangentially related, consideration regarding this notion of bugging out on foot is one's physical condition. If you get winded walking to the mailbox at home, a *Lord of the Rings* style journey probably won't end well for you.

A more realistic approach is to have some sort of motorized conveyance available, ideally something with four-wheel drive in case you need to pop onto a freeway median strip for a bit to get around traffic snarls. At the very least, a working bicycle with pannier bags is better than hoofing it.

The overall point here is to stress that turning to novels and movies for realistic survival advice isn't usually a great idea. Sure, the plotlines can maybe get you thinking and planning, but don't rely on a fiction writer to come up with workable solutions for you.

Sheltering in place at home is usually the best option in some disaster scenarios. However, there are times when getting out of town is the ideal, such as if there is an encroaching wildfire.

A bicycle can be a great bug-out vehicle option. It won't run out of gas, though you might.



Ending up in a community shelter is nobody's idea of a good time.

STAY OR GO

TIME TO BEAT FEET

MAKING THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS

BY JIM COBB

> THE BASIC RULE I'VE ALWAYS SUGGESTED IS THAT ONE SHOULD HUNKER DOWN AT HOME UNTIL OR UNLESS HOME IS NO LONGER SAFE. FOR MOST OF US, THIS IS WHERE WE KEEP OUR FOOD AND SUPPLIES. IT IS WHERE WE FEEL THE MOST COMFORTABLE. WE'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE AREA AND HAVE AT LEAST A PASSING KNOWLEDGE OF THOSE AROUND US.

BUT, THERE MAY INDEED come a time when we need to hit the road with some degree of quickness. The faster you can get moving, the more likely you'll be ahead of the crowd, rather than stuck on a highway that's practically become a parking lot.

WHAT TO CONSIDER?

To stay or go is a decision that is intensely personal. Some factors that should be taken into account include:

✖ **Your Family Composition** Do you have small children? Elderly/infirm family members? In some cases, it might not be feasible to even consider evacuating.

✖ **Your Options for Transportation** Do you have a reliable vehicle? If you have no way to transport yourself and your family, bugging out might be off the table.

Your Destination Options Do you have a bug-out location or two in mind? The last thing you want to do is hit the road without somewhere you and your family can go. That's part of the planning process.

In addition, travel might be risky, depending on the situation at hand. For example, the disaster might be causing problems with road conditions.

It is a delicate balancing act, in that you don't want to just up and go every time something looks sketchy, but you also don't want to hesitate too long and end up in a worse situation.

LOOK FOR RED FLAGS INDICATING YOU NEED TO EVACUATE NOW!

WHAT YOU SHOULD WATCH FOR

In some cases, the decision to evacuate might be easy. For example, a wildfire is getting too close for comfort or a Category 4 hurricane is eyeballing your town for landfall. Other times, it might be that it isn't the initial disaster that's causing concern, but the aftermath.

One approach is to identify a few red flags that will be triggers to loading up the car and getting out of town. Here are some I watch for and recommend that you do the same.

1) Massive storms are imminent. I don't live in hurricane country, but if I did and there was a big one targeting my area, I'd probably see that as a good enough reason to go visit Aunt Sally in Iowa for a few days.

2) An impending declaration of martial law. Personally, I don't want to be stuck in an area that is under martial law, with all the restrictions that might bring. If I feel such a declaration is likely to happen, I'd rather get out ahead of time.

3) Violence headed your way. If reliable reports indicate groups of bad actors are moving in my direction, I'd rather get out ahead of them than have to break through their ranks. Stuff can be replaced, my kids cannot.

Involving children helps them to understand what you're doing and will often reduce anxiety.

WHAT TO GRAB?

If you're in a situation that precludes you from casually going room to room to pick and choose what to toss into an overnight bag, and assuming you didn't have the forethought to have an actual bug-out bag staged and ready to go, there are three items that are absolutely essential to grab.

Never leave animals chained or tied. If you can't take them with you, leave them to run loose.

- **Car Keys** You're not going to get far if you can't start your vehicle.

- **Wallet** Cash and credit cards can solve an awful lot of problems during a disaster, as well as allow you to obtain food, water, shelter and other necessities.

- **Cellphone and Charger** Use this to let people know where you are and what you might need, as well as to research road conditions and secondary routes, if required.

I'm well aware that in the event of world-altering, society-ending disasters, such as a massive solar flare or a total financial collapse, some or all of those items will become worthless. But they all work just fine, right until they don't. In other words, don't disregard them entirely because there's a remote chance they might not have value later.

WHERE TO GO?

Always have a plan for where you'll go and how you'll get there, should the need arise. This need not be some hidey-hole way back in the holler. There are very few realistic disaster scenarios where your lot in life will be improved by running off to the forest. Talk to family and friends who live outside your immediate area and see about making arrangements to stay with them for a bit, if need be.

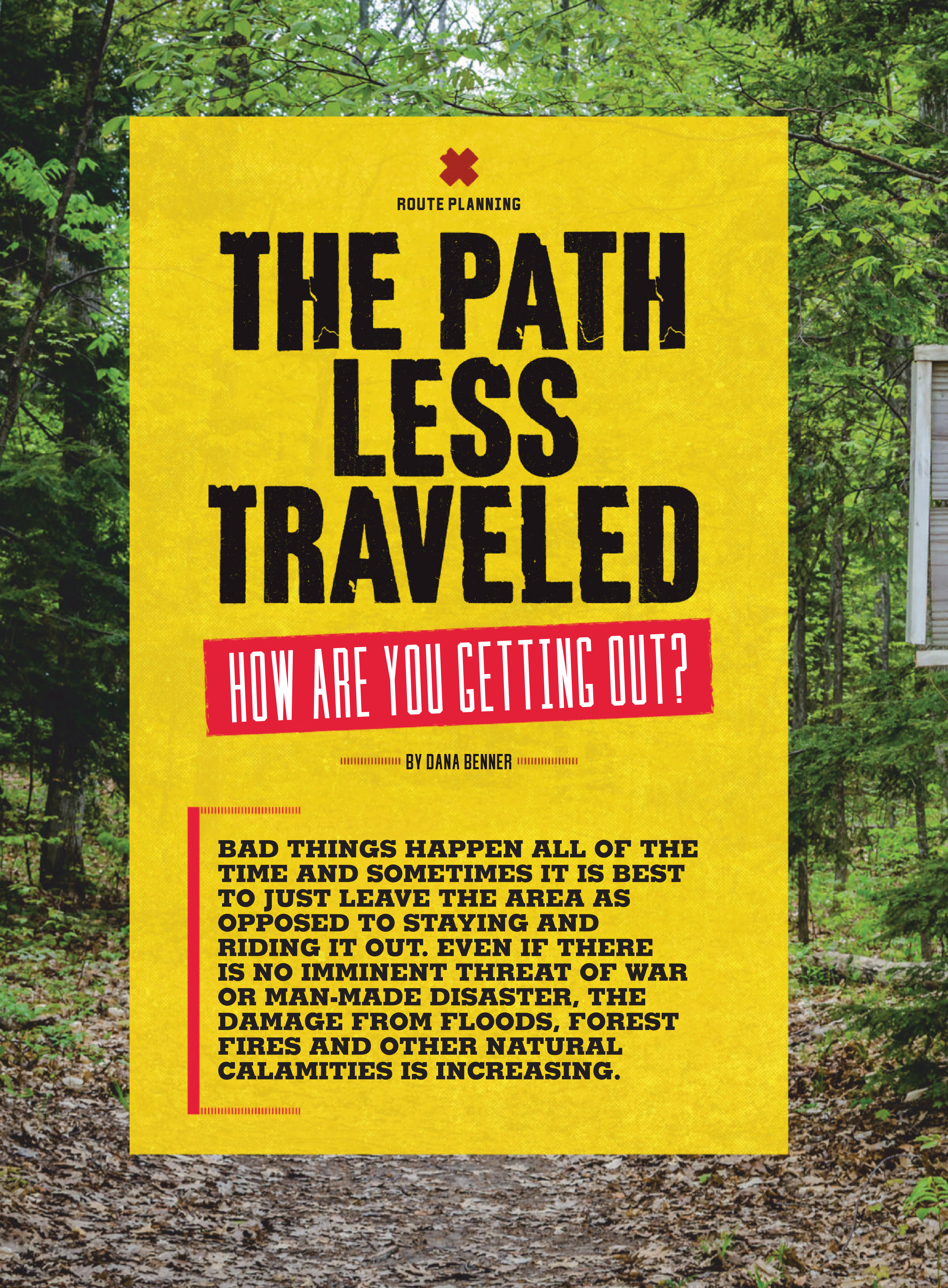
Motels are another option, though you'll probably have to travel a distance from the affected area to find one that has a vacancy. If you have pets, call around now and find out which ones will allow them to stay with you. Keep a list of those places with your evacuation supplies. If at all possible, call ahead and make a reservation while you're on your way.

BUGGING OUT ISN'T ALWAYS IDEAL

USE COMMON SENSE AND LOGIC TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO.

It is a common misconception, even among those who have been involved with prepping for quite some time, that bugging out should always be your primary plan in an emergency. I'm not quite certain why that is, but I suspect movies and novels have a lot to do with it. I mean, there's something to be said for the high-flung adventures of the typical lone wolf hero who is trekking on foot across the country to rescue his family or just find his way back home.

But don't be so eager to bug out in a crisis. Yes, there are definitely times when that is going to be the best solution and you should plan for it. At the same time, though, you need to determine some criteria as to when it would make sense for you to do so rather than staying home and availing yourself of the supplies and gear you've so painstakingly compiled.



ROUTE PLANNING

THE PATH LESS TRAVELED

HOW ARE YOU GETTING OUT?

BY DANA BENNER

BAD THINGS HAPPEN ALL OF THE TIME AND SOMETIMES IT IS BEST TO JUST LEAVE THE AREA AS OPPOSED TO STAYING AND RIDING IT OUT. EVEN IF THERE IS NO IMMINENT THREAT OF WAR OR MAN-MADE DISASTER, THE DAMAGE FROM FLOODS, FOREST FIRES AND OTHER NATURAL CALAMITIES IS INCREASING.

3
HIKING
PATH
OLD MISSION POINT PARK

There are many ways to get from point A to point B.

IF YOU HAD TO GET OUT, how would you do it? How many different escape routes do you have planned? Keep in mind that most major roads will be clogged with traffic or be otherwise impassable. The same could be true with secondary roads. Let's look at one more option, one many people have overlooked or just don't know about. I'm talking about the thousands of miles of trails that crisscross our nation.

WHERE TO START

My good friend Stan asked me about the numerous trail systems that traverse our state as possible escape routes in the case of an emergency. New Hampshire is a relatively small state, and although I know about many of the trails, I didn't get the full scope of what is there until I started doing some research.

The thing about research is that the deeper you dig, the more that you will uncover. What I found is that the massive number of trails that run in my area is not unique. Every state has them, and if you follow those trails, most will lead, eventually, to safety.

CHOOSING THE BEST TRAIL

The trails I'm speaking about are not the normal "top of the mountain" ones, although portions of these trails may have a role to play. The ones I'm concerned with are the routes that take you from a seemingly bad place to a good one, while offering the least perceived amount of danger and energy expenditure. We are not talking about a leisurely hike. Our goal here is survival, and nobody in that situation wants to hike to the top of a mountain unless they have no other choice. And while no single trail will do the job, there is a system of interconnecting trails that will work, and there are many of these to consider throughout the country.

RAIL TRAILS

Railroad tracks once ran all across the nation. When the age of rail was replaced by motor vehicles, thousands of miles of track were abandoned. Eventually tracks and ties were pulled, leaving a valuable resource: the railway bed.

Today, some of those railway beds have been reclaimed by states, towns and private organizations, like the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Because of this work, there are 2,294 open trails that cover 24,923 miles. Many current roads roughly run close by these old railbeds, which means that they may be listed on some road maps. Where there are roads, there are usually places to stock up on supplies. A prime example of this is the East Coast Greenway. This series of interconnecting rail trails stretches from Maine to Florida. There are other such trails across the entire United States.

SNOWMOBILE, BIKE AND HIKING TRAILS

While rail trails are great, they don't go everywhere. That is where alternative trail systems can fill the gap. Snowmobile trails are a good example. In areas of the country where snow cover is normal, you will find many miles of marked snowmobile trails, and because they are marked, they are easy to follow during the warmer months of the year. Many often link up with rail trails. It is like following a highway with many different exits. There is an entire snowmobile trail system that will take you from where I live in southern New Hampshire all the way to the Canadian border. Some of these trails link up with others that run south into Massachusetts, east into Maine and west into Vermont. Each and every trail connects with another, complete with fuel and supply stops along the way.

Another option is the long-distance trail systems such as the Long Trail in Vermont, the Pacific Crest Trail through California and the Appalachian Trail, which runs from Maine to Georgia. All of these trails have side trails that will take you to supplies and link up with still more trails that can lead to just about anywhere.

Just as snowmobile trails are numerous in the Northeast, horse trails are popular in both the South and the West. Horses are the best all-terrain vehicles and they can get into, and out of, places a motorized vehicle cannot go. They are just the thing you need to get out of the area. Even

MAKE A PLAN

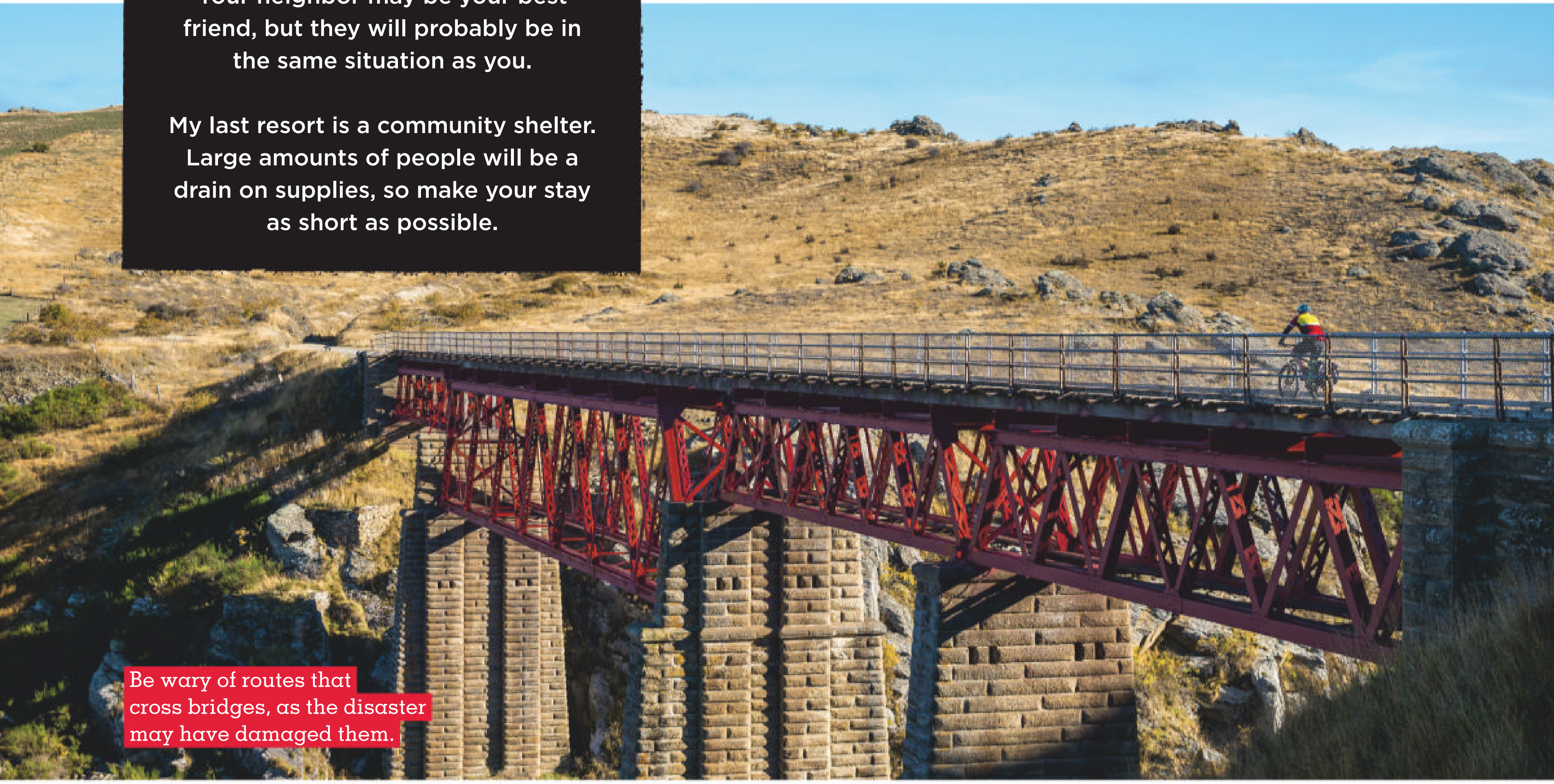
CHOOSING YOUR BUG-OUT LOCATION.

Part of your bug-out plan must be a destination. Better yet, have multiple locations in case something happens. When choosing a bug-out location, make sure to pick one that makes sense and is not possibly worse than the place you are leaving.

Have your own predetermined safe place. A cabin, trailer or shelter that is self-sustaining is best. It should be a safe distance from your present location.

The home of a family member or friend is another option, provided it away from your present location. Your neighbor may be your best friend, but they will probably be in the same situation as you.

My last resort is a community shelter. Large amounts of people will be a drain on supplies, so make your stay as short as possible.



Be wary of routes that cross bridges, as the disaster may have damaged them.

Larks Meadow - Chorleywood Common
Local Nature Reserve since 2004
You are here
CHORLEYWOOD
The Chilterns
an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Parks and nature preserves can serve as shortcuts, if you know where the trails lead.

if you don't have a horse, these trails will often lead you to a safe place and a water source.

WHERE TO LOOK

It is fine and dandy that I rattled off these different trail systems, but how do you locate the ones near you and how do you work them into your evacuation plans? It really is much easier than you may think. The first thing is to gather as much information as you can, starting with maps. The best maps I have found are the Gazetteers put out by DeLorme. There is one for each state and they provide a host of valuable information, including most trail systems.

Next, look to town, state and federal agencies. I'm talking about fish and game departments (both state and federal), forestry departments (state and federal), tourist departments (state and federal) and town and state recreation departments. Most of these agencies have up-to-date trail system maps of all types. Last, contact local and national organizations dedicated to outdoor preservation, hiking, snowmobiling, biking and horseback riding in your area and ask questions regarding their trails and if maps are available.

PLOTTING YOUR ROUTE

Once you have all of your maps, it is time to sit down and get to work. Take all of the maps and then cross-reference them. Some may have different, more accurate information than others. For example, forestry service maps may show access and logging roads—items that will not normally show up on other maps.

When it comes to safe evacuation routes, it is always best to have multiple plans. If plan A doesn't work, fall back to plan B and so on. My plans B, C and D are constantly changing and I continue to update my maps.

DRY RUN

Just as with every survival skill, if you don't practice evacuating, everything up to this point has been a waste of time and effort. Make sure you get out there to travel and scout each of your routes. Find out the pros and the cons. Make sure to do this often and in all weather conditions and at all times of the year. These trails will look different in the summer than they do in the winter. Some of the trails you put into your plan may not exist anymore. Some may be overgrown or have massive blowdowns, thus making them nonviable options. If you are satisfied with your routes then it is time to take all members of your group along those same trails. Do this multiple times and pay attention to every detail.

I really hope that I never have to use plan A, B, C or D, just as I hope to never have to use my firearm to protect my family. But there could come a time when I will. We just never know what will happen or when. If we do need to move, I want my family to be prepared and know the drill by heart.

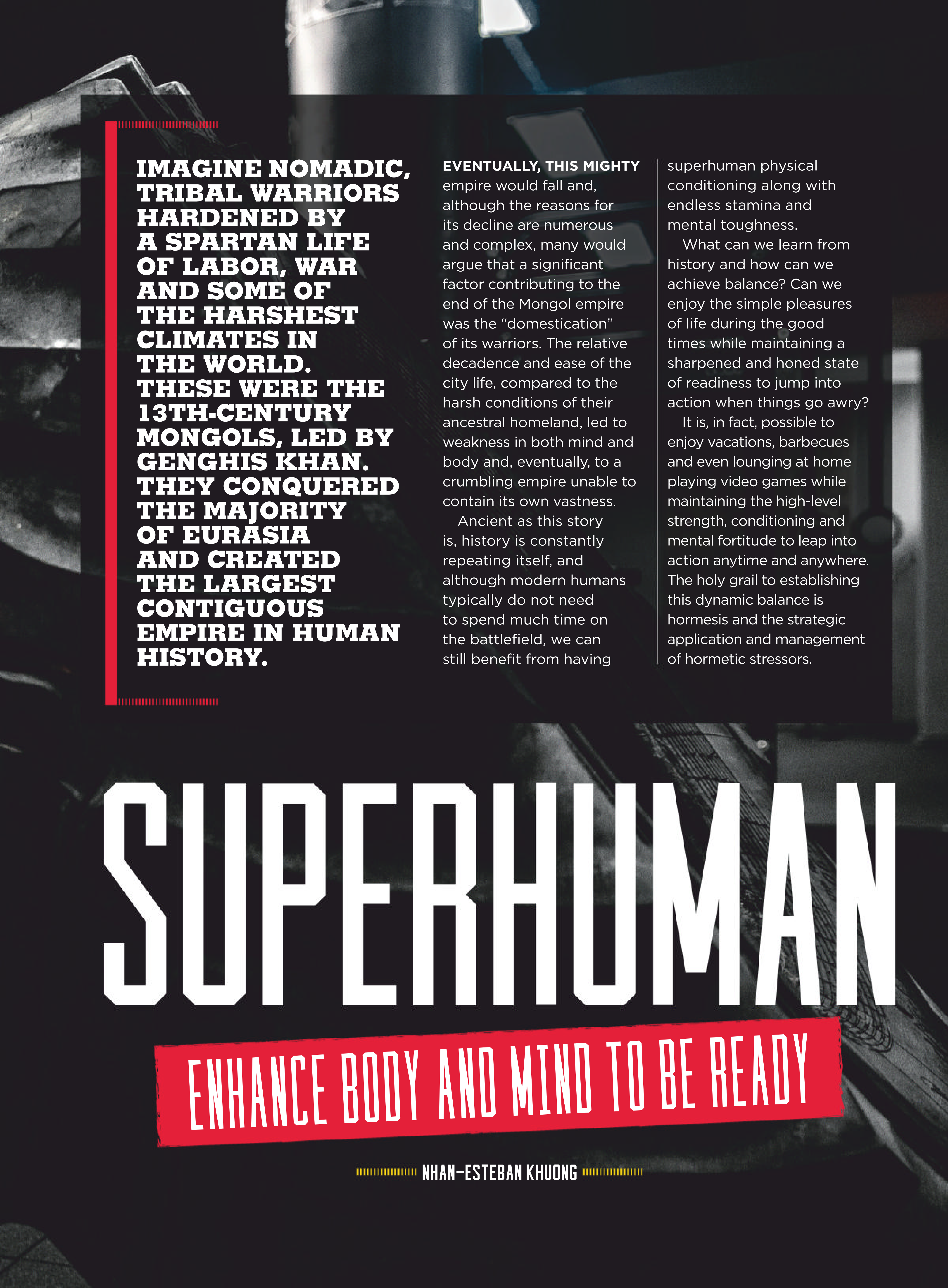
About the Author *Dana Benner has been writing about all aspects of the outdoors, survival and self-sufficiency for 34 years with his work appearing in regional and national publications.*

Once you identify a potential route, get out there and check it out in person. Maps aren't always accurate and trails can change over time for a variety of reasons.

Every challenge you overcome in the gym means you're that much more ready for survival stressors.

TRAINING

BECOMING



SUPERHUMAN

ENHANCE BODY AND MIND TO BE READY

NHAN-ESTEBAN KHUONG

IMAGINE NOMADIC, TRIBAL WARRIORS HARDENED BY A SPARTAN LIFE OF LABOR, WAR AND SOME OF THE HARSHEST CLIMATES IN THE WORLD. THESE WERE THE 13TH-CENTURY MONGOLS, LED BY GENGHIS KHAN. THEY CONQUERED THE MAJORITY OF EURASIA AND CREATED THE LARGEST CONTIGUOUS EMPIRE IN HUMAN HISTORY.

EVENTUALLY, THIS MIGHTY empire would fall and, although the reasons for its decline are numerous and complex, many would argue that a significant factor contributing to the end of the Mongol empire was the “domestication” of its warriors. The relative decadence and ease of the city life, compared to the harsh conditions of their ancestral homeland, led to weakness in both mind and body and, eventually, to a crumbling empire unable to contain its own vastness.

Ancient as this story is, history is constantly repeating itself, and although modern humans typically do not need to spend much time on the battlefield, we can still benefit from having superhuman physical conditioning along with endless stamina and mental toughness.

What can we learn from history and how can we achieve balance? Can we enjoy the simple pleasures of life during the good times while maintaining a sharpened and honed state of readiness to jump into action when things go awry?

It is, in fact, possible to enjoy vacations, barbecues and even lounging at home playing video games while maintaining the high-level strength, conditioning and mental fortitude to leap into action anytime and anywhere. The holy grail to establishing this dynamic balance is hormesis and the strategic application and management of hormetic stressors.

Bugging out can be a very physical activity, involving everything from walking and running to carrying heavy loads. Increasing your body's capabilities can only help in this regard.

Hormesis, essentially, is the favorable biological response to a low-dose stressor. For example, it's the idea of developing a resistance to toxins by exposing one's self to them in very small doses. This biological response to strengthen the body to a particular stressor can also be applied at the mental/emotional level in that a low-dose psychological stressor will create greater mental resilience.

Practically, we can apply hormesis within four major domains including:

- **Environmental**
- **Psychological**
- **Physiological**
- **Nutritional**

Of course, this should go without saying that exposing oneself to extreme conditions does not come without risk and should always be approached with caution, the clearance of your physician and expert guidance. For the purpose of this article, we'll be focusing on the first three domains and tackle the complexity of nutritional hormesis in a future issue.

INVULNERABILITY

The ability to operate in extreme environments oftentimes makes or breaks the success of a high-stress endeavor. As such, heat and cold adaptation are the gold standards of environmental hormesis, making a heat- and cold-adapted person seemingly invulnerable to varying conditions.

The human body has the amazing capacity to generate heat as well as cool itself down but the degree to which it can do this will be based on how acclimated one is to extremes. Exposing oneself, on a regular basis, to extreme environmental temperatures triggers two primary physical pathways that supercharge the body: heat shock protein synthesis and mitochondrial regeneration.

Heat shock proteins (HSPs) are helper proteins that aid biological processes when extreme temperatures might be

Cold-water immersion boosts heat shock proteins. It's also a great practice that will help develop the insular cortex when you push through discomfort.

interfering. The body generates these special proteins when under the stress of both extreme cold and heat.

An easy way to encourage HSP synthesis is by using a sauna for 15 to 20 minutes between 175° F and 200° F.

Exposure to cold also stimulates heat shock proteins to a lesser degree, but also has the advantage of improving mitochondrial density and function. The mitochondria are the power plants of our cells and having more of them, and operating more effectively, not only increases energy and stamina for your body and brain, it also increases the ability to resist cold.

A good way to boost your mitochondria is exposure to cold. The feeling of being cold and slightly hypothermic with mild shivering for 10 to 15 minutes is a helpful way to start. The gold standard of cold therapy, however, is cold-water immersion at temperatures less than 59° F. If you have access to an ocean, lake or cold stream, these work well. Otherwise an ice bath or cold plunge tank are also great.

IMPREGNABLE MIND

Hormesis works in a similar way within the human psyche in that strategic amounts of stress will increase resilience. Exerting top-down control during stressful, but manageable, situations is an easy way to start building psychological resilience. Top-down control is the act of using thought to overcome instinct. For example, try taking cold showers or pushing through the discomfort of a hard workout. It's mind over matter—willing yourself to do, or not do, something when your base instinct is screaming otherwise.

Incorporating a daily practice of top-down control will strengthen your mind by strengthening your insular cortex. The insula is a part of the brain that processes sensory information, along with emotions as well as conscious decision-making; all three functions are critical during emergencies.

There are very few activities that change the brain in this way, but studies have shown that a

Time-restricted feeding is one of the easiest ways to benefit from intermittent fasting. For more, see sidebar on page 69.

LEARN TO OVERCOME FEAR, DISCOMFORT AND EVEN PAIN TO BE UNSTOPPABLE.

Pulling exercises are another core strength movement to help prepare for emergencies.

regular practice of leaning into discomfort, especially of a physical nature, will actually grow the gray matter within the insula. Find a daily practice that is physically challenging and requires pushing through the desire to stop. This can be anything from strength training to yoga.

Some of the benefits of a supercharged insula include increased pain tolerance, a greater ability to manage emotions and maintain calmness, better processing of sensory information, and improved integration of values with decision-making. In short, a more powerful insular cortex will allow a person to assess an environment and make more rational decisions with greater speed and accuracy.

TAKE IT SLOW AND EASY AT THE BEGINNING SO AS TO AVOID ACCIDENTS OR ANY SORT OF SERIOUS INJURY.

UNSTOPPABLE

Exercise is, essentially, the application of a hormetic stressor. For example, lifting something heavy elicits a favorable adaptive response, such as getting stronger. In an emergency situation, strength and endurance will almost always make the biggest difference between life and death.

From a strength perspective, lifting heavy objects off the ground and both pushing and pulling them will be the big three movements. If you have the time and inclination, a strategic fitness program will help to give you an edge. However, the simplest way to improve your strength and ability is to simply do these activities.

Practice lifting a variety of heavy objects, such as sandbags, rocks, logs or even people, from the floor to both waist and chest height. Practice pulling and pushing objects such as a weighted sled, a person or a loaded cart. Creativity is the only limiting factor here.

So, you have the strength, now you have to keep it up for an extended period of time. Building up endurance is going to involve a combination of muscular and cardiovascular exercise.

Building muscular endurance is a simple matter of increasing the volume of work you are doing. In other words, if you are pulling a sled for five minutes, try pulling it for three sets of five minutes, then add additional days throughout the week.

The gold standard of cardiovascular endurance is running, but really anything that elevates your heart rate can do the trick, including walking, swimming and cycling. Elite endurance athletes may use a variety of complex training protocols to achieve superior performance but the average person really only needs to focus on two: low level cardio and maximum level cardio.

The majority of your training, at least 150 minutes weekly, should focus on Zone 2 cardio, which is about 70% of your maximum heart rate (HR). An easy way to know that you are in Zone 2 is that you should be breathing heavily but still able to hold a reasonable conversation. In addition to Zone 2, it will be important to reach, or at least approach, your maximum HR at least once or twice weekly. Sustaining a maximum HR is not necessary or even recommended. Rather, one simply has to work up to the maximum, then immediately start working down to rest or Zone 2. The best way to measure your maximum HR is using a heart monitor; otherwise you can also use a maximum HR formula that takes into consideration your age and gender.

PEAK PERFORMANCE

It might seem like a lot, but much of this strategy can be applied simultaneously and the benefits to a person's quality of life are so good that the investment in time and effort really pays off.

The average modern person's durability and conditioning is far below that of our ancient ancestors. With a little creativity and the right mindset, becoming superhuman is an enjoyable and healthful addition to a daily practice of self-care, personal development and preparedness.

About the Author *Nhan-Esteban Khuong is a co-founder of EarthSky People where he explores human potential through primitive skills, martial arts, fitness, health, performance and biohacking. He can be found at earthskypeople.org.*

METABOLIC FLEXIBILITY

SURVIVAL SECRET FOR TOUGH TIMES.

Carbohydrates and fats form the core of the human dietary energy source, with carbs being the body's preferred fuel, when available. Generally, this is fine until food becomes scarce and carb sources decline. The body goes into starvation mode and one experiences severe withdrawal symptoms, including headaches, fever, extreme fatigue, lethargy and brain fog. These symptoms persist until the metabolism adjusts to burn fats for fuel, which can take up to a week. In the meantime, physical and mental performance drop down into the dumps.

Intermittent fasting is a great way to encourage metabolic flexibility so that, in times of need, one's body can quickly change between fuel sources with minimal or no withdrawal symptoms. This is, essentially, a form of hormetic stress encouraging a metabolic adaptation. A benchmark of intermittent fasting is taking a 24-hour fast one day per week. This approach, however, can seem daunting for most.

Perhaps the easiest way to incorporate a form of intermittent fasting is "time-restricted feeding." The idea here is to extend the daily fast by keeping meals within a relatively small feeding window. Fasting begins once the digestive system is empty, which is typically a few hours after dinner, and the fast is then broken with breakfast or the first intake of food that raises blood sugar.

By eating dinner early and eating breakfast late, or skipping one of the two altogether, the fasted state is extended, which encourages the body to preferentially burn fat. This effect is further enhanced by keeping meals reasonably low in carbohydrates and relatively high in fats.

A good starting point for feeding window length is 10 hours with a target goal of reducing it to six hours. Whenever possible, adding a 24-hour fast at least once a month should be sufficient to help you maintain adequate metabolic flexibility.

An ax is a great multipurpose tool to have in your pack.

BUG-OUT BAG

NEW AND IMPROVED

UPGRADING YOUR EVACUATION EQUIPMENT

BY DANA BENNER

IN THE SURVIVAL WORLD, IT PAYS TO STAY ON TOP OF THINGS, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR GEAR. YOU WILL WANT TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THOSE ITEMS THAT WILL GIVE YOU ANY ADVANTAGE.

FOR THAT REASON, I GIVE my bug-out bags a yearly going over to eliminate what is not truly needed, repair what is broken and possibly to update with something better and more practical.

LESS IS MORE

All too often, people pack way too much stuff. When equipping your bug-out bag, you have to limit your gear to must-haves. Remember the four basics: food, water, shelter and fire. Bugging out is not a long-term hiking trip, at least we hope not. That means your bag is not going to be a big pack made for extended times out on the trail. Instead, it will be a bag only large enough to carry just what you need.

As space will be limited, only carry what you will require for immediate survival. If you are grabbing your bug-out bag, then it means that you are in imminent danger and need to leave in a hurry and hopefully head to a location where additional supplies can be obtained.

WEIGHT AND SPACE

Weight and space are my main concerns when reviewing my gear. There is only so much room in my bag and I don't want to be bogged down with excess weight. The goal is having the ability to move quickly. Any chance that I get to lighten my load and save space I will take, but only as long as it will not compromise the four basics. The trick is to be smart with what and how you pack. Packing gear that can serve several functions will go a long way toward addressing the weight and space issue.

UPDATED GEAR

I don't need the "latest and greatest" stuff just because it is new. I do, on the other hand, take advantage of new gear as long as it will better my situation. Every year, all of the major gear companies come out with new products. Many of them are great, but some are only designed to attract buyers, so review the products closely and make sure they are what you need. Keeping the four basics in mind, the following are items I have obtained to update my gear.

YOU DON'T NEED TO SPEND A TON OF MONEY, BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOU NEED TO AVOID BUYING JUNK.

VSSL CAMP SUPPLIES

What if you could carry most of your emergency essentials all together and do it in a 2-inch-diameter tube about the size of a

The Gerber Bushcraft hatchet has storage for a lighter and paracord.

NATURALLY FLAVORED
WILD BERRY
HONEY STINGER
PROTEIN W
NET WT. 1.3 OZ (36 G)
NATURALLY FLAVORED CHOCOLATE MI
GLUTEN FREE
HONEY STINGER WAFFLE
FUEL MADE SIMPLE
NET WT. 1.06 OZ (30 G)
Certified GF Gluten-Free
USDA ORGANIC

High-energy snacks, like these by Honey Stinger, should be in your bag.

> BE SURE TO USE YOUR GEAR REGULARLY SO YOU'RE COMFORTABLE WITH HOW IT WORKS.

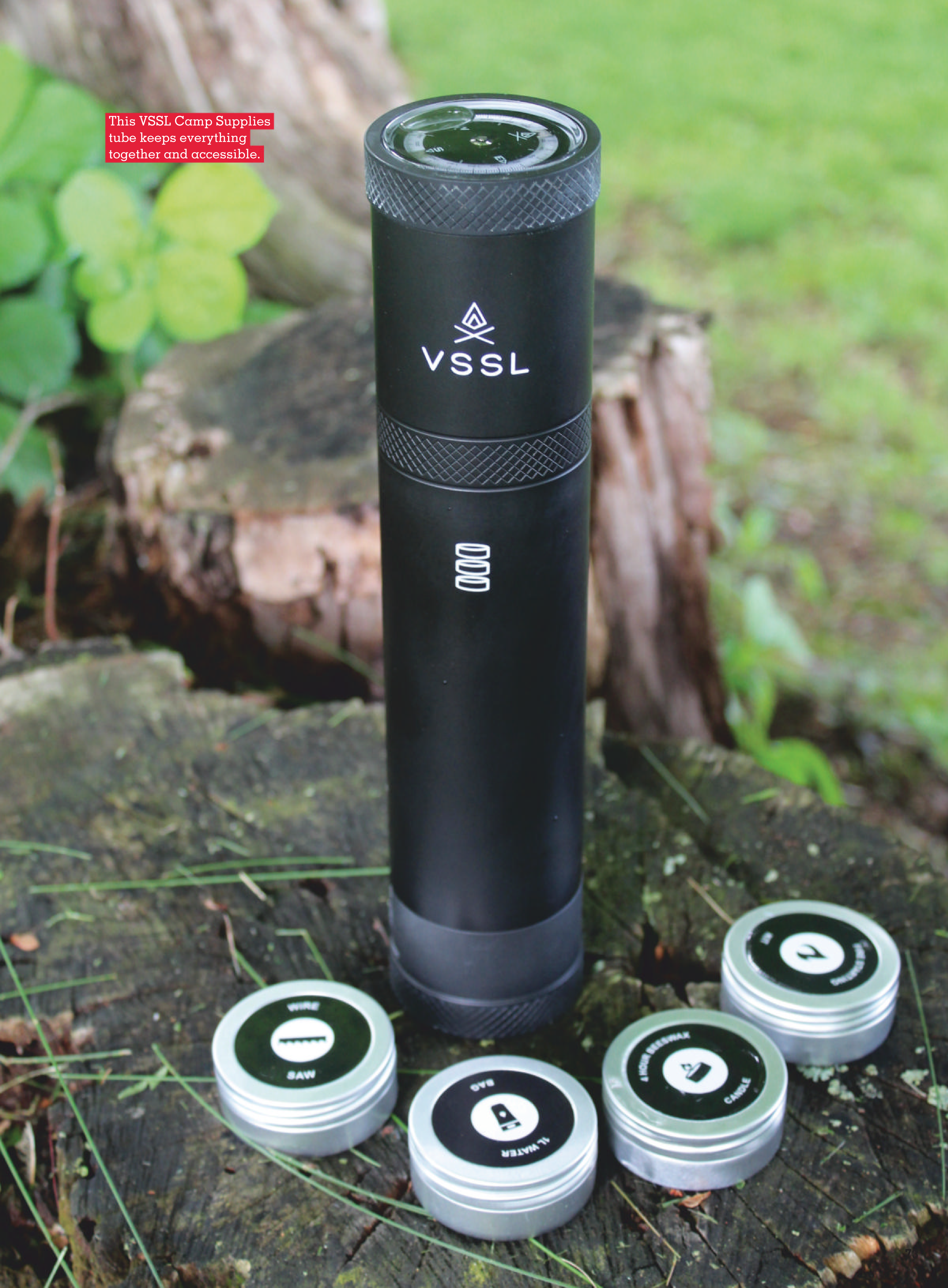
good flashlight? Well, you can. VSSL is a Canadian company that makes products geared for the outdoors community. They have tried to cover all bases with this product. VSSL has put together a kit with 70 pieces of essential gear, including cordage, a flashlight, compass, wire saw, sewing kit, small first-aid kit, waterproof matches, tinder and a host of other items, stored in aluminum stackable tins. Then those tins are put in a 9.375-inch aircraft-grade aluminum tube. The total weight is 1.32 pounds. The gear this one item carries has not only allowed me to eliminate duplicates and loose gear, but also helps cut down on the overall weight of my pack—and believe me, every ounce counts. $145; *vsslgear.com*.

GERBER BUSHCRAFT HATCHET

I consider knives, saws and hatchets/axes as vital survival tools and for that reason I include them in my bug-out bag. The problem is usually they are too heavy and take up too much space, even if you fasten them to the outside of your bag. Up until recently, I carried a Gerber 9-inch hatchet in my pack. It is a good tool, but always seemed to lack something. Now Gerber has come out with the Bushcraft hatchet. Though heavier than my old one (this one weighs 2.4 pounds), the Bushcraft does so much more. A longer handle offers greater striking power, a hammer head makes driving tent pegs a breeze and a forged head makes for more efficient cuts. A water-resistant storage area in the handle stores up to 5 feet of paracord and a mini butane lighter. The Bushcraft hatchet has an overall length of 15.25 inches and a blade length of 5.5 inches. $60; *gerbergear.com*.

SAWYER BOTTLE WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM

You can never have enough water. That is why a hydration system is always part of my pack. Despite what you can carry, there


This VSSL Camp Supplies tube keeps everything together and accessible.

VSSL
WIRE
SAW
BAG
1L WATER
4 HOUR BEESWAX
CANDLE

WHAT TO PACK

CARRY JUST THE ESSENTIALS.

When packing your bug-out bag always keep in mind the four essentials: water, fire, food and shelter.

Water You can never carry enough, so a way to treat water that you find along the way is necessary.

Fire Having a way to start a fire is a must. Carry disposable lighters, matches and/or a ferro rod.

Food Freeze-dried foods weigh very little. Don't forget high-protein snacks.

Shelter A high-quality bush knife or hatchet and cordage are tools that will help you build shelters while on the road.

Sawyer®
Bottle
Water
Filtration
System

The Sawyer Bottle Water Filtration System combines a water filter and container into one, saving space.

The Gerber Devour Ti is more than your average "spork."

will be times when you will need to draw water from wild areas. As you can never trust any unknown water system, a good filtration system is key. A Sawyer Mini has always been in my pack, along with a bottle for collecting the water. So when updating my gear, I turned once again to Sawyer. Its Bottle Water Filtration System combines the two components (filter and container) into one complete unit. This concept saves space and simplifies the water-collecting process. And the total kit, which includes a 24-ounce BPA-free Titan bottle and a dual-thread Mini filter, only weighs 7.5 ounces. $50; *sawyer.com*.

GERBER DEVOUR TI

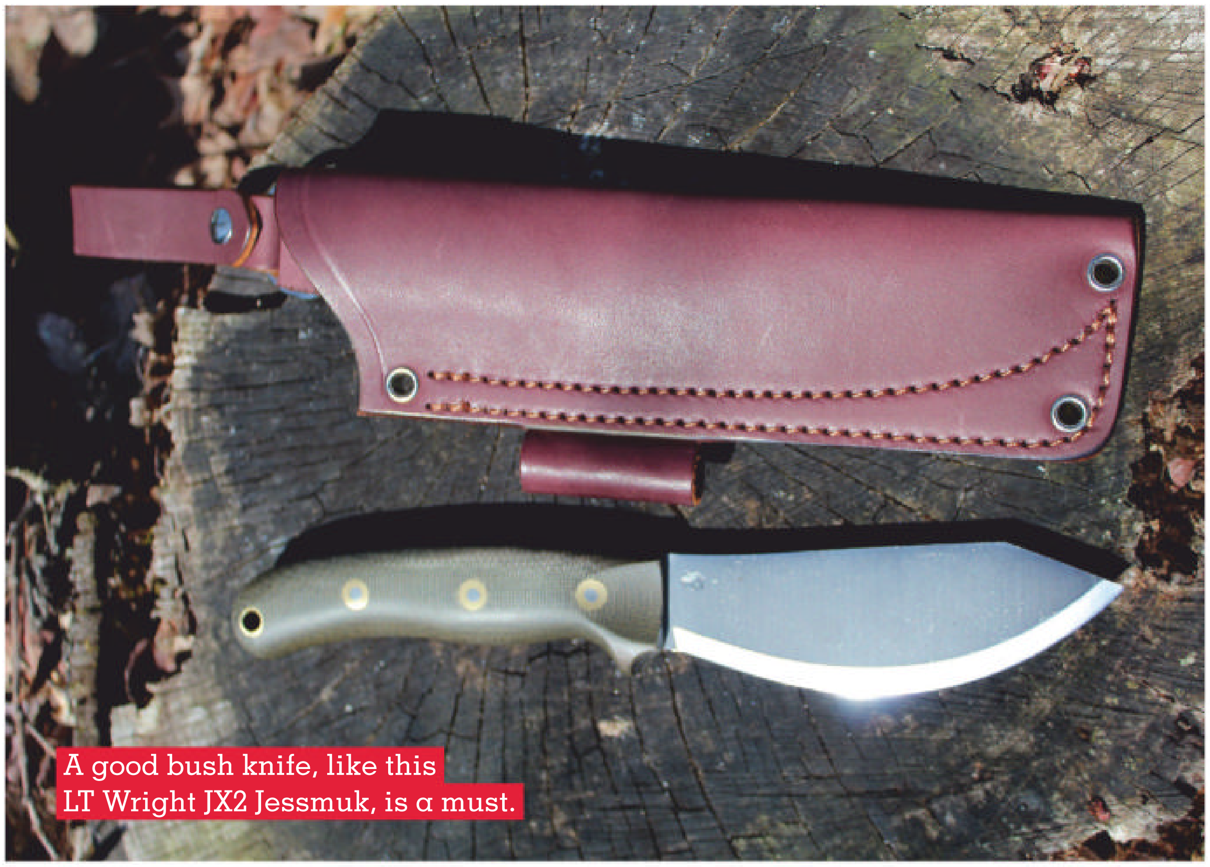
If you have ever tried to eat a military ration meal or freeze-dried meal without a spoon or fork, you will understand the need for some utensil. Most of us carry plastic forks or spoons, but there is a better tool: the Gerber Devour Ti. The Devour is much more than a spork. It is a multitool that combines a fork/spoon with two flathead screwdrivers, a pry bar, as well as a bottle and can opener. The "Ti" stands for titanium, which gives this tool its strength, while at the same time cutting down on the weight (it only weighs .83 ounces). $20; *gerbergear.com*.

LT WRIGHT JX2 JESSMUK KNIFE

A sturdy fixed-blade knife is a given for any decent survival kit. The Jessmuk was designed by Chris Tanner and produced by LT Wright Knives, which has made a few versions of this model over the years. It is very comfortable to use and will handle just about any knife chore you can imagine, from food prep to processing wood for a fire. This model has scalloped edges at the top of the handle, allowing for a pinch grip that is excellent for precision work. The blade has a sweeping belly, somewhat reminiscent of an ulu knife, while the spine has a precise 90-degree angle, making it perfect for striking a ferrocerium rod. From $235; *ltwrightknives.com*.

plastic clothesline with hook
corde à linge en plastique avec crochet

Cordage has multiple uses and should be in your bag.



A good bush knife, like this LT Wright JX2 Jessmuk, is a must.

Snackable Jerky with a CRUNCH
THE NEW PRIMAL
BEEF THINS
SEA SALT
100% GRASS-FED BEEF USED
RAISED WITHOUT HORMONES
RAISED WITHOUT ANTIBIOTICS
NET WT. 1 OZ (28g)
Snackable Jerky with a CRUNCH
THE NEW PRIMAL
BEEF THINS
BBQ RECIPE
100% GRASS-FED BEEF USED

High-protein snacks, like these from The New Primal, will hold you over until you can stop.

[SECTION / 04]

PROTECT YOURSELF & YOUR LOVED ONES

SECURITY & DEFENSE

It can be a delicate balance between being able to easily access your stuff and keeping it under wraps.

ANTI-THEFT

HOME TREASURE HIDING

PROTECT YOUR VALUABLES FROM THIEVES

BY MICHAEL D'ANGONA

HARD WORK CAN PRODUCE WONDERFUL RESULTS. BEING ABLE TO BUY THINGS THAT YOU NEED AND WANT IS A GREAT FEELING. FROM DIAMOND JEWELRY TO RARE COLLECTIBLES AND MORE, OVER TIME YOU CAN AMASS A NUMBER OF VALUABLE ITEMS.

HOWEVER, NOT EVERYONE in this world follows a positive work ethic. There are people out there who follow the easier path and take what isn't theirs, and that can include your prized possessions. These thieves will think nothing of all the time, sweat and stress you put in to acquire your goods and in one fell swoop it could all be gone after they break into your home.

But all is not gloom and doom. You can fight back against this possible

Always consider the storage conditions of hiding places and make sure your valuables won't be in danger of damage from humidity, pests and other hazards.

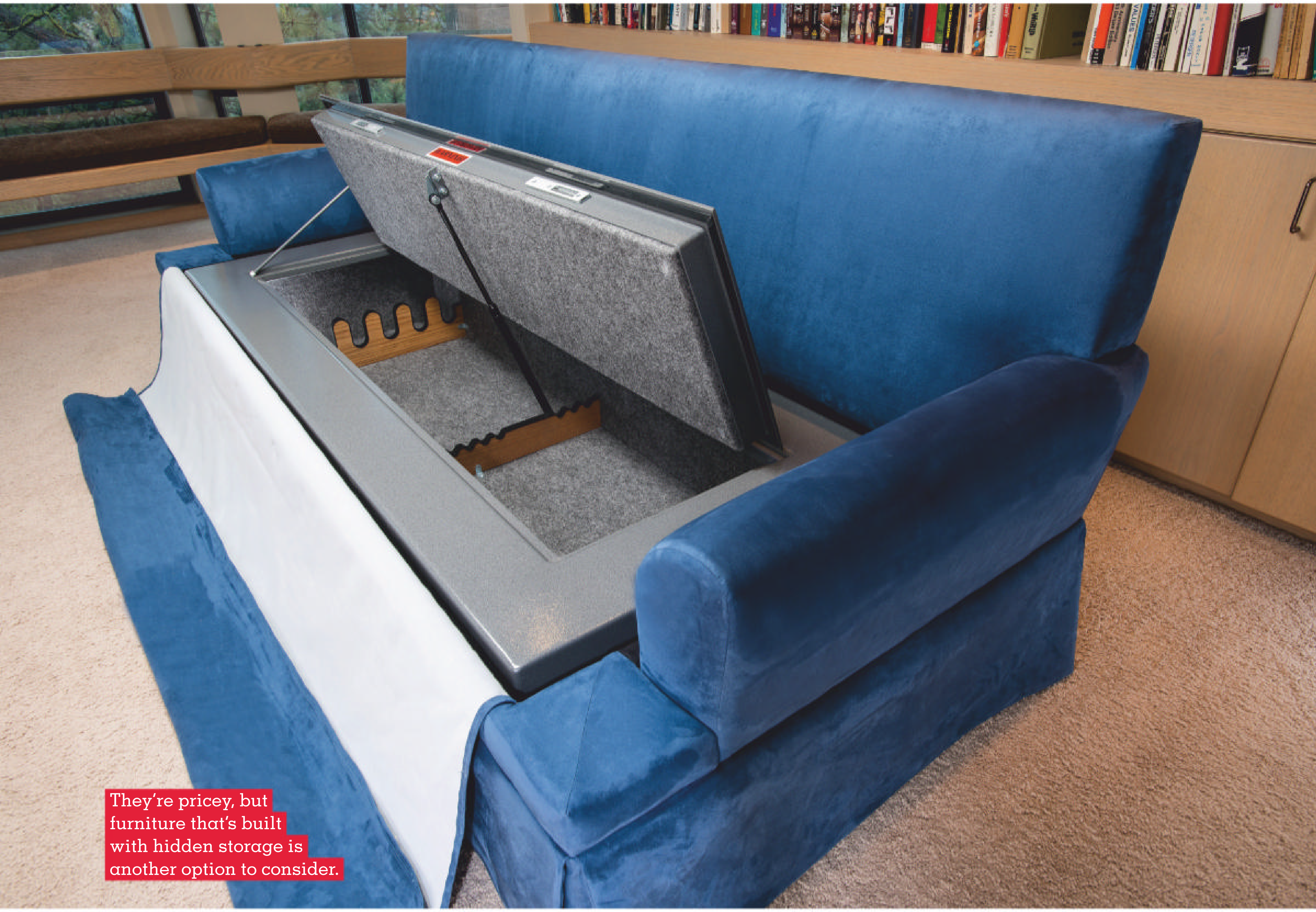
scenario by hiding your valuables away from the sticky hands of crooks in places that they would never even consider. Here we'll discuss how to fool the bad guys with some ingenuity, common sense and out-of-the-box thinking.

SCARY STATS

If you're one of those who feel a break-in wouldn't happen to you, you could be surprised when your home is at the center of the next neighborhood robbery. Statistically speaking, your home is a target for thieves more frequently than you may think. According to FBI statistics, a burglary happens every 26 seconds, or 3,300 times per day. Nearly 250,000 break-ins happen during the day, and around 200,000 happen during the nighttime, with houses that do not have a security system being the favorites of thieves. It's also interesting to note that most home break-ins are committed by people living within a two-block radius of the burglarized home. So, if you think you're immune to a criminal coming to your neighborhood and selecting your house to rob, you may want to think again.

SIMPLE OPTIONS

Hiding your valuables from thieves doesn't have to be complicated or put an incredible strain on your wallet. There are viable, store-bought options that can help to conceal your valuables both easily and economically. If you are trying to hide jewelry, cash or other small-sized valuables, then simple



They're pricey, but furniture that's built with hidden storage is another option to consider.

diversion safes may work for you. These safes take the guise of everyday items throughout your home, like cans of soda, gallon paint cans, bathroom cleaners, shaving cream and jars of peanut butter, among other options. But unlike their true counterparts, these containers are empty inside with a simple screw-off cap at the bottom. Just insert your valuables within the containers and place them amongst the actual products throughout your home. They will blend in, and the thieves will be none the wiser to your ruse.

Additionally, book safes are also an inexpensive option. These empty-on-the-inside books can hold important papers, jewelry, cash and even firearms, and when placed on a bookshelf with hundreds of other literary options, the thief most likely wouldn't have the time to check them all.

Another option to hide some of your precious possessions is just as inexpensive but takes a little handyman talent to install—electrical outlet safes and air conditioner vent safes. These hidden wall safes are installed in the drywall of your interior walls and appear exactly like their functioning doppelgangers. The installation is simple. You need to cut out a piece of drywall and install the self-contained safe within the opening. Then just open the safe, place your valuables inside and score a win against the crooks.

These hiding places work great, but they are not totally foolproof.

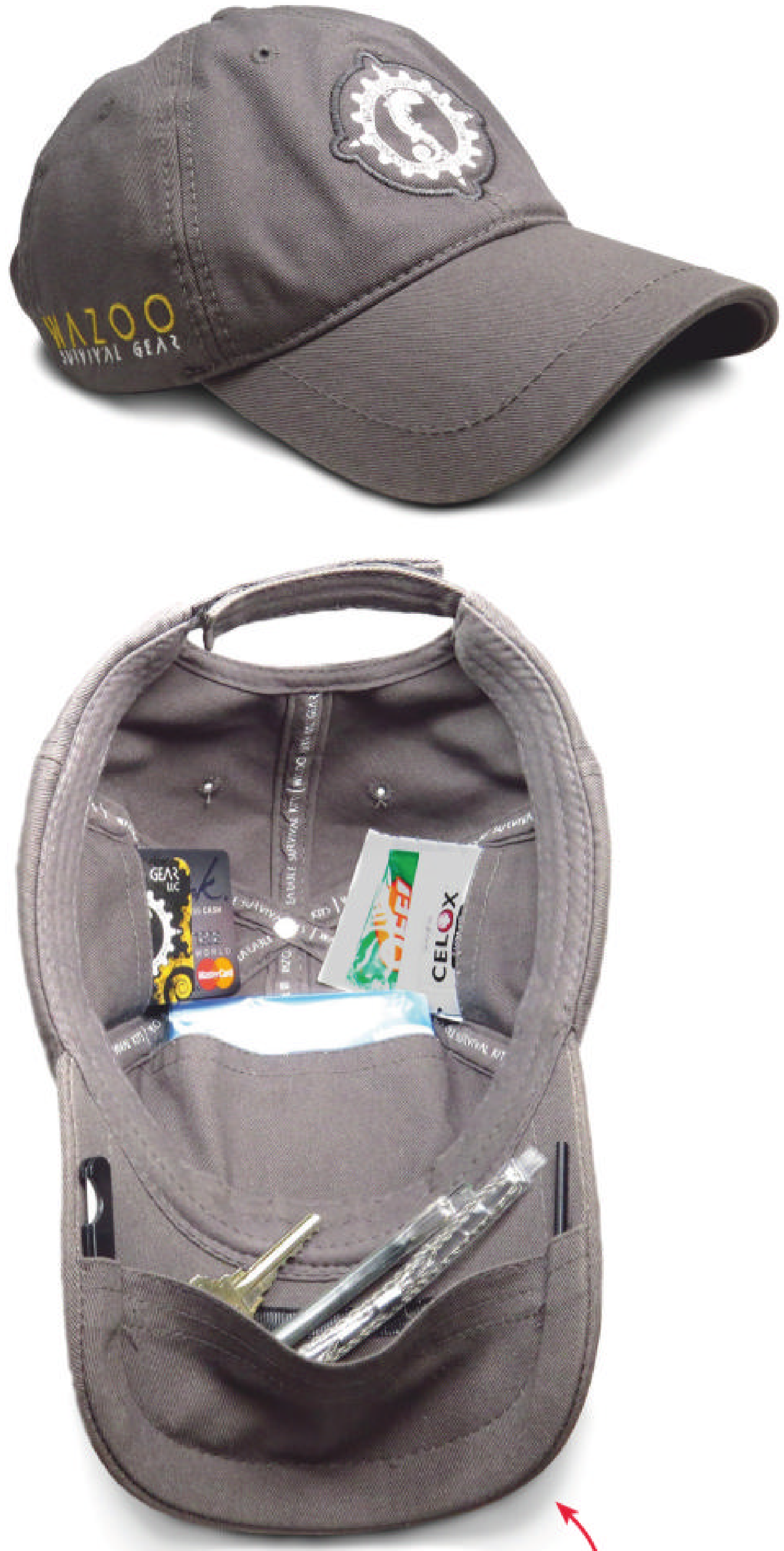
GOING BIG

If money is no object and you have various larger valuables you need to hide, there are many options on the market that can suit your needs. Safes integrated within furniture, constructed within the floor or built into a secret compartment in a wall can hold firearms, entire files of paperwork, mini jewelry boxes and large amounts of cash and coins. The benefits of such safes are that they are very hard to detect and if they are found by thieves, they offer a nearly impregnable design. They are also extremely heavy, so just carrying one out of the home is really not possible.

These big boys of the safe world offer key, push button or fingerprint access and most are built to endure structure collapse or fires without incurring excessive damage. Prices for these safes run between hundreds of dollars for smaller versions to tens of thousands for more elaborate designs, especially when incorporated within luxury furniture. Again, these safes are not for everyone. They are pricey, need installation and, at times, require some minor renovation to your home.

CREATE YOUR OWN

For the clever people out there, there are hiding options that don't require any cash or alterations to walls. You can create simple secret stash locations using ordinary items found throughout your home. One option is the "planter" safe. This involves a live house plant and an oversized pot. First, find a container that is just large enough to fit snugly at the top of the selected pot. Then add soil and the plant to the container. Next place valuables inside the large primary pot and place the contained plant on top to conceal the opening. The hollow interior acts as the "safe," while thieves



These hats from Wazoo Survival Gear are clever concealers.

Diversion safes like this can be handy.

FOUND IT!

AVOID THESE COMMON HIDING PLACES.

Think you'll fool the thieves? Not if you hide your valuables in any of these locations.

Drawers Just covering up your valuables with some clothes and pushing them to the back of the drawer won't keep a thief from finding and taking your stuff.

Under the Bed Think a thief won't bend over to check under the bed? Think again!

Closets Hiding cash or jewelry in the closet is the fastest way to see it stolen from your home.

Under the Mattress It takes no effort for a thief to flip over a mattress, so avoid this common hiding location.

Bags and Packs You're just making it easier for a thief to carry stuff out the door if you put valuables in a backpack or handbag.

Laundry Basket Some dirty or smelly clothing won't deter a thief from dumping your clothes out and sifting through.

Refrigerator or Freezer Unless you hide your valuables within camouflaged containers within your refrigerator or freezer, it's very easy for a thief to open a door and take your stash.

will perceive that the entire pot is filled with soil and pass it by.

Another homemade safe option involves kitty litter, a sealable vessel and a large plastic container with a lid (a 13-gallon trash can works great). Fill about a quarter of the trash can with litter, then add your valuables (within the sealed vessel) to the kitty litter in the can. Finally, fill the trash can to the top with kitty litter and you're all done. A thief, most likely, wouldn't sift through the powdery litter hoping to find a treasure.

A safe does little good if it is able to be carried away. Installing it in the floor keeps it secure.

Finally, false bottoms in kitchen drawers and bedroom dresser drawers are easy to create and fool the rushed thief more often than not. These false bottom drawers can hide all sorts of items ranging from important paperwork to jewelry, valuable flash drives holding personal information or simple cash and/or credit cards. Just cut a thin piece of wood in the dimensions of the drawer, glue a few slim pieces of wood as stoppers an inch or two above the drawer bottom, and then cut a small notch toward the back of the insert to be able to slip your finger through to lift and open the panel, and you're done. Few thieves will have the time or patience to test every drawer for your easily created false bottoms.

ON YOUR PERSON

Your home may be securely locked down from thieves when you travel, but are you? Traveling locally, domestically and internationally all pose a risk for you to be robbed and lose your cash, cards, small electronics and more. You can reduce the loss of these items if you're unfortunately mugged with some savvy purchases made prior to your trip. Clothing items, from jackets to hats, shirts and belts, can help hide your valuables from robbers and they'll be none the wiser. These garments feature compartments hidden within the seams or numerous secret pockets

Clothing with hidden pockets can help keep your electronics and such from disappearing.

only accessed from within the piece of clothing. This way you can hide the majority of cash you are carrying, your major credit cards and your phone, and only keep a small amount in more obvious and common front pockets as a decoy for thieves. If robbed, you can give them the chump change and they'll go away with a pittance rather than a treasure.

THINK SMART

Remember, nothing is foolproof. You can hide your valuables in some of the safest and most secure places throughout your home and they can still be spotted by a thief and stolen when you're away. However, this is the exception rather than the rule. The truth is that it makes the best sense to diversify your hiding spots. Avoid keeping all of your eggs in one basket. Split your items up and secure them in distinctively different locations. Hide some in the garage, others in the kitchen and still others in the pantry, your kid's room and attic. By understanding how a robber thinks, you'll be one step closer to keeping your valuables securely in your possession and making your thief's visit a total bust with him scurrying out empty-handed.

About the Author *Michael D'Angona is an experienced martial arts instructor, survival skill practitioner and writer for numerous national magazines.*

Keep a little cash and a spare key inside this knit cap.

SELF-DEFENSE

AVOIDING THE EXPLOSION

LEARNING HOW TO DEFUSE CONFRONTATIONS

BY WAYSUN JOHNNY TSAI

ARMCHAIR QUARTERBACKS OFTEN ASK QUESTIONS LIKE, "DID THAT COP HAVE TO SHOOT THAT GUY? COULDN'T HE HAVE JUST DE-ESCALATED THE SITUATION?" DE-ESCALATION IS ALWAYS EASIER SAID THAN DONE, ESPECIALLY WHEN DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ARE INVOLVED.

MANY FAMILIES HAVE THAT one relative who is famous for starting drama and arguments at gatherings, getting louder and more physical as the night goes on. There is also usually one family member who has learned through experience how to calm him down or remove him.

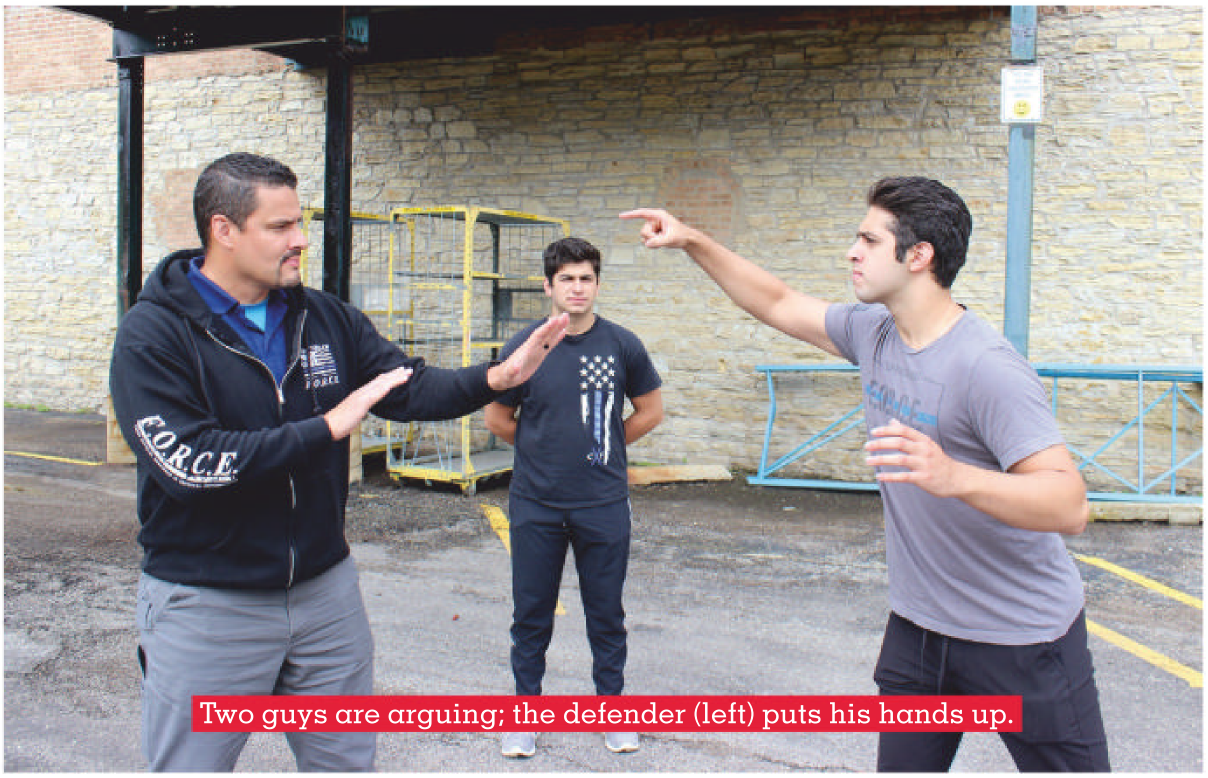
Experience is the key word. Unfortunately, there are only two ways to truly know how to de-escalate a potentially violent situation: experience and training.

LEARNING THE HARD WAY

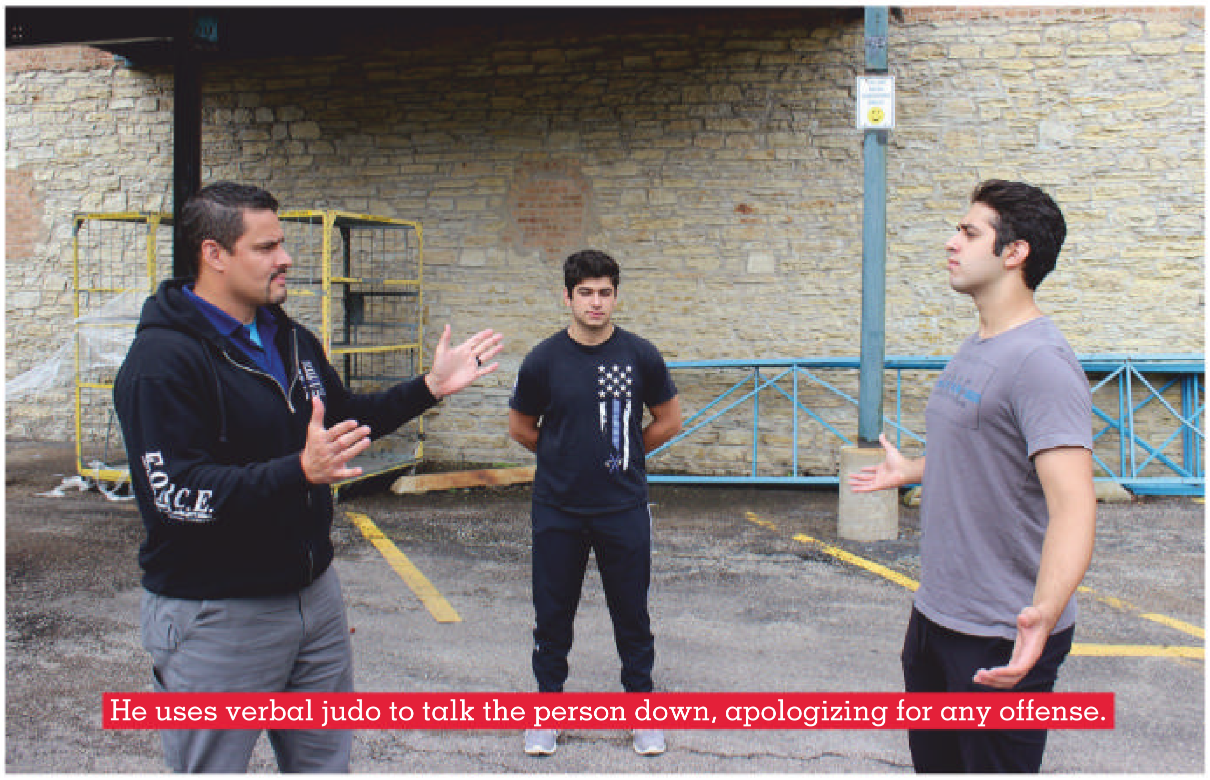
My first venture into the private security sector was in bouncing. Let me start by saying that skill sets aside, I am not a big and scary-looking human being. Almost everyone is taller than I am, so drunks and impaired people all feel like they can beat me up on sight.

When I first started working, I was a ring fighter and a

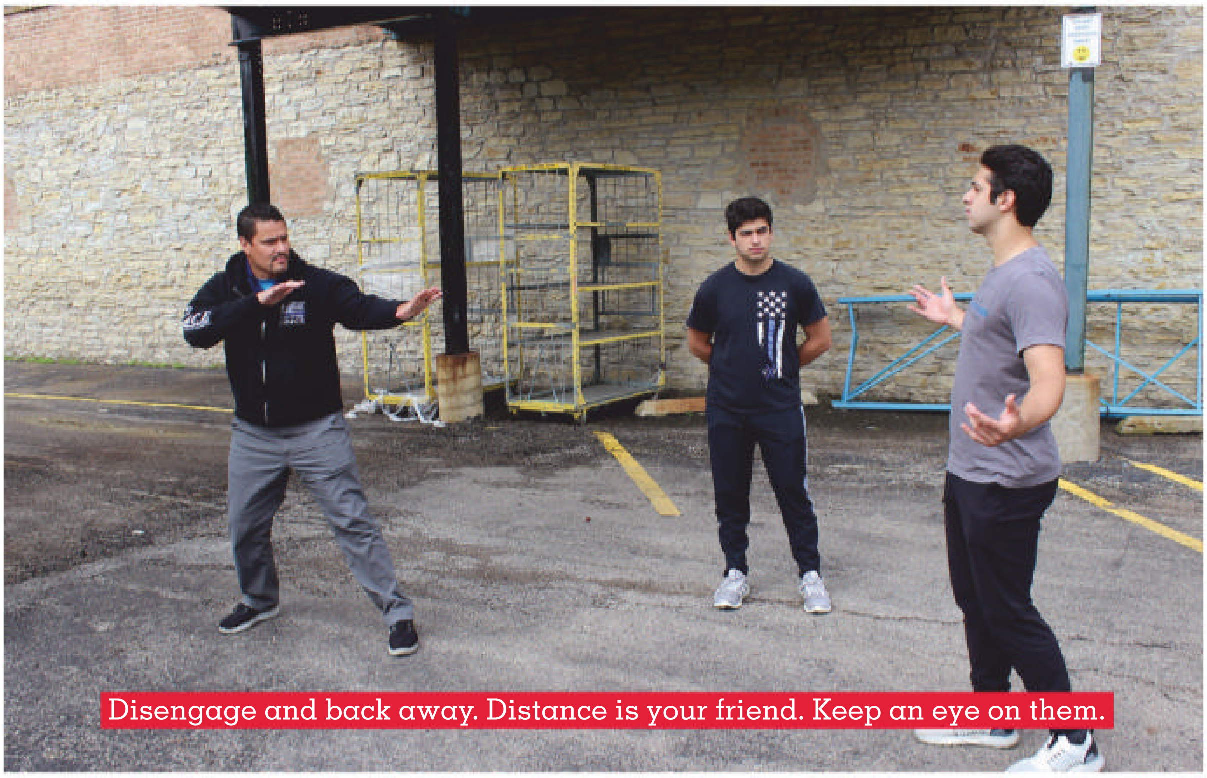
Always try to talk your way out of a fight, if possible.



Two guys are arguing; the defender (left) puts his hands up.



He uses verbal judo to talk the person down, apologizing for any offense.



Disengage and back away. Distance is your friend. Keep an eye on them.

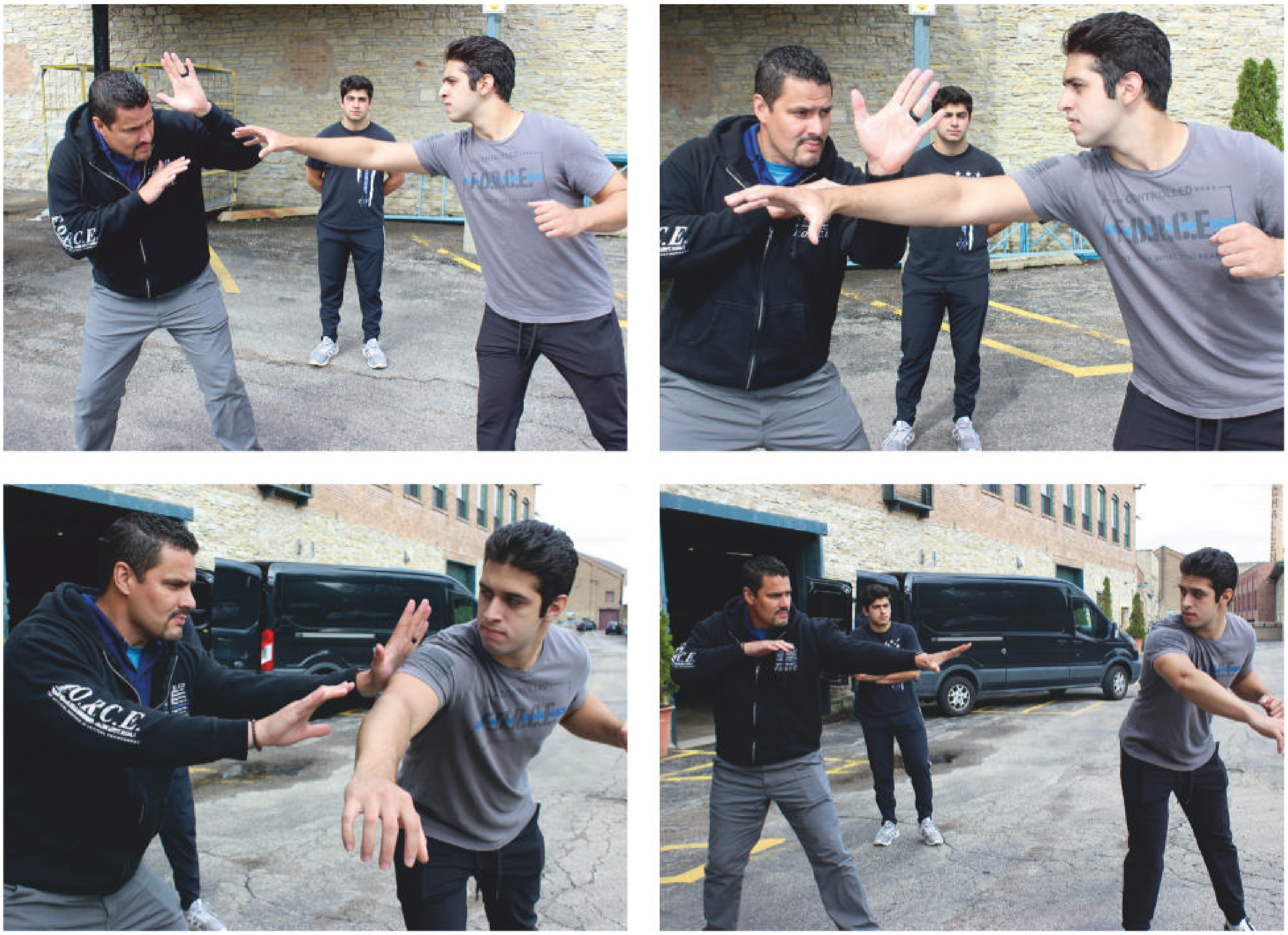
black belt, and I didn't mind going straight to hands on. I quickly realized that I would rather grab a drunk and throw them out before throwing a punch. Then, I learned to use words and de-escalation techniques, which made my nights on the job a lot less violent. Finally, I learned to remove myself from working at venues that were known for troubled crowds. Working at peaceful venues and events is where I made the best and easiest paychecks. I realized that you could no longer pay me enough to be in the middle of fights every night.

But fights happen at nice places, too. Through experience, I learned how to apply angles, evasions and other techniques I'd trained in with Controlled F.O.R.C.E. (First Official Response in a Critical Environment), including what we call M.A.C.H. (Mechanical Advantage Control Holds) to stop, control and even redirect an aggressor out of the venue entirely.

The following examples are easy techniques that you can use to de-escalate, control and disengage to gain distance to get away from someone that may want to cause you harm.

VERBAL JUDO

Your first option is verbal judo de-escalation. Step back and apologize, even if you are right. Then, walk away, always keeping the would-be attacker in your sight. In this example (left), you will notice that our defender has his hands



The attacker ignores the attempt to de-escalate the situation and reaches in with a push. The defender sidesteps to the outside with an open-hand block, then pushes the outside shoulder before disengaging and backing away to create distance.

up in a passive defensive stance. The only difference between that and a guard is there are no balled-up fists. Fists indicate that you are ready to fight and can escalate the situation.

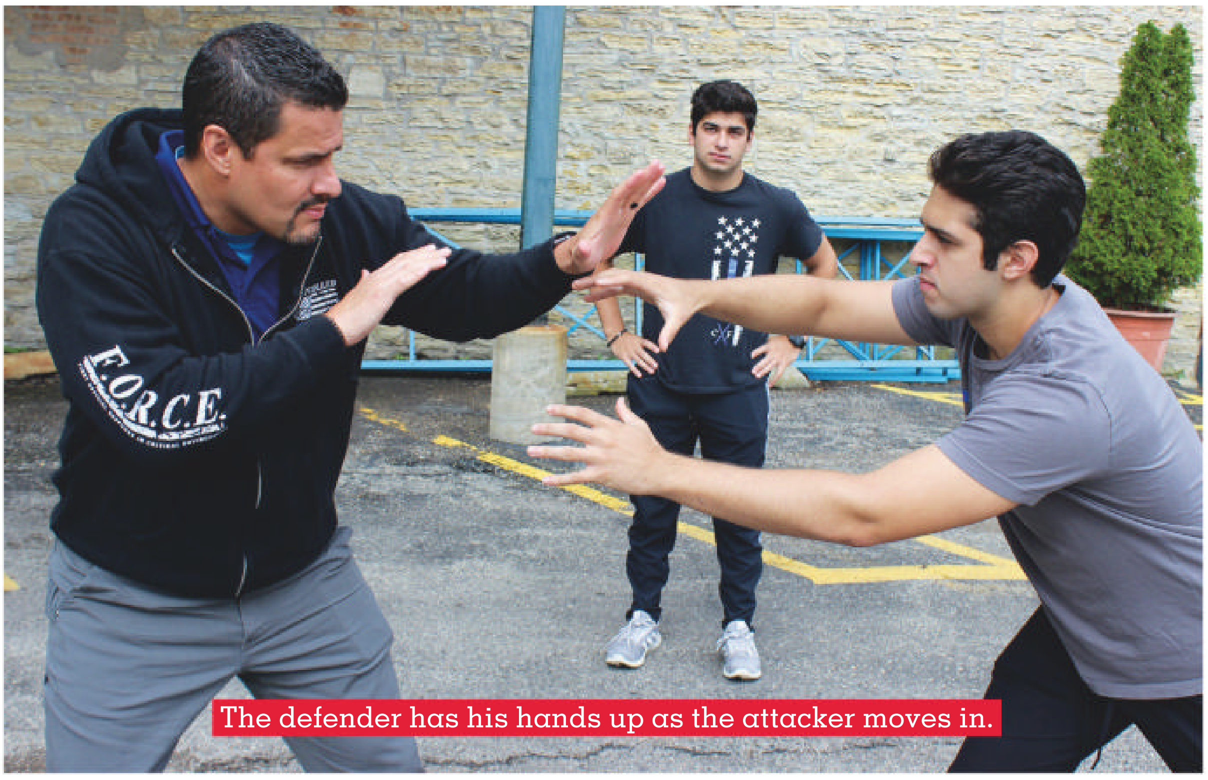
AVOIDANCE

In the second scenario (above), words are not working. The aggressor decides to reach in with a push, shove or grab. This defender steps out and angles outside the attacker's arm, shoving it away and then backing off. Verbally, he repeats that he does not want to fight. Once again, he steps back to gain distance and walk away. Even when walking away, never turn your back on a would-be attacker until you are at a safe distance. Keep them in your sight until you are safely away.

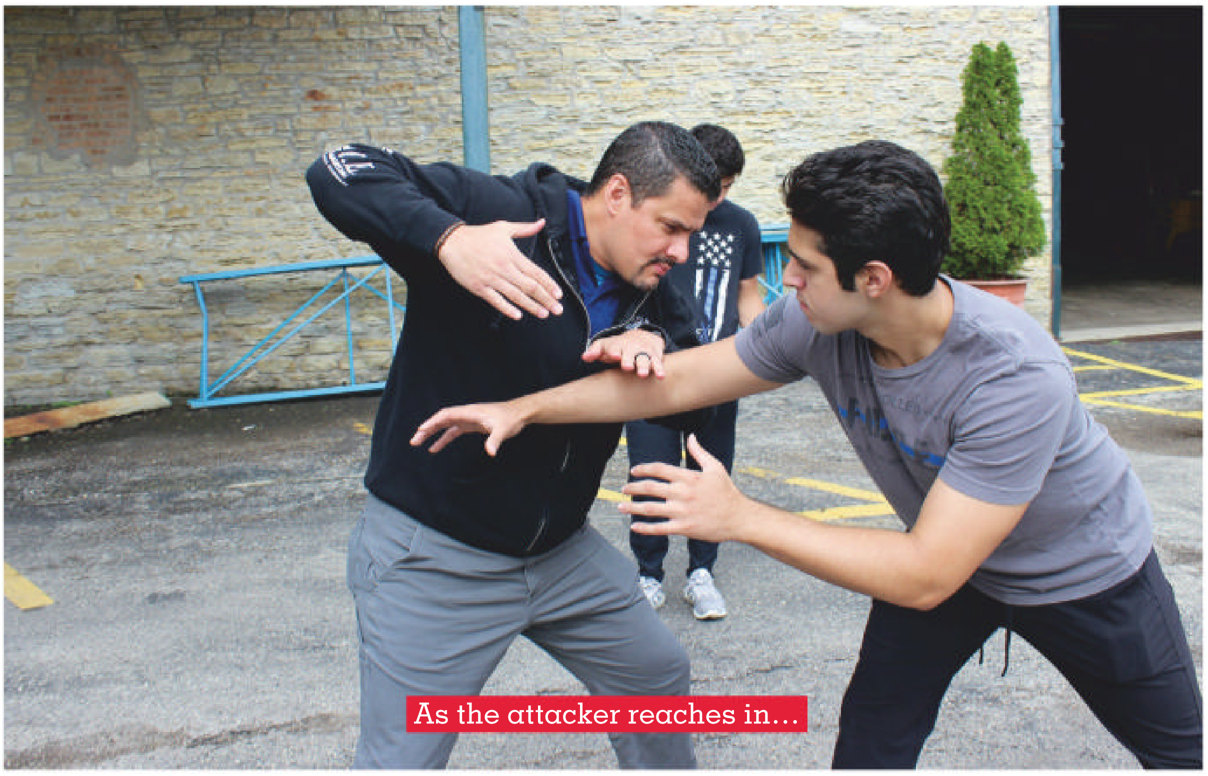
HANDS ON

In the third scenario (page 88), the aggressor does not take no for an answer and attempts a second attack. Continue to use verbal judo to attempt to defuse the situation. But this time when he comes in you will apply a basic M.A.C.H move: Spin him around, push him

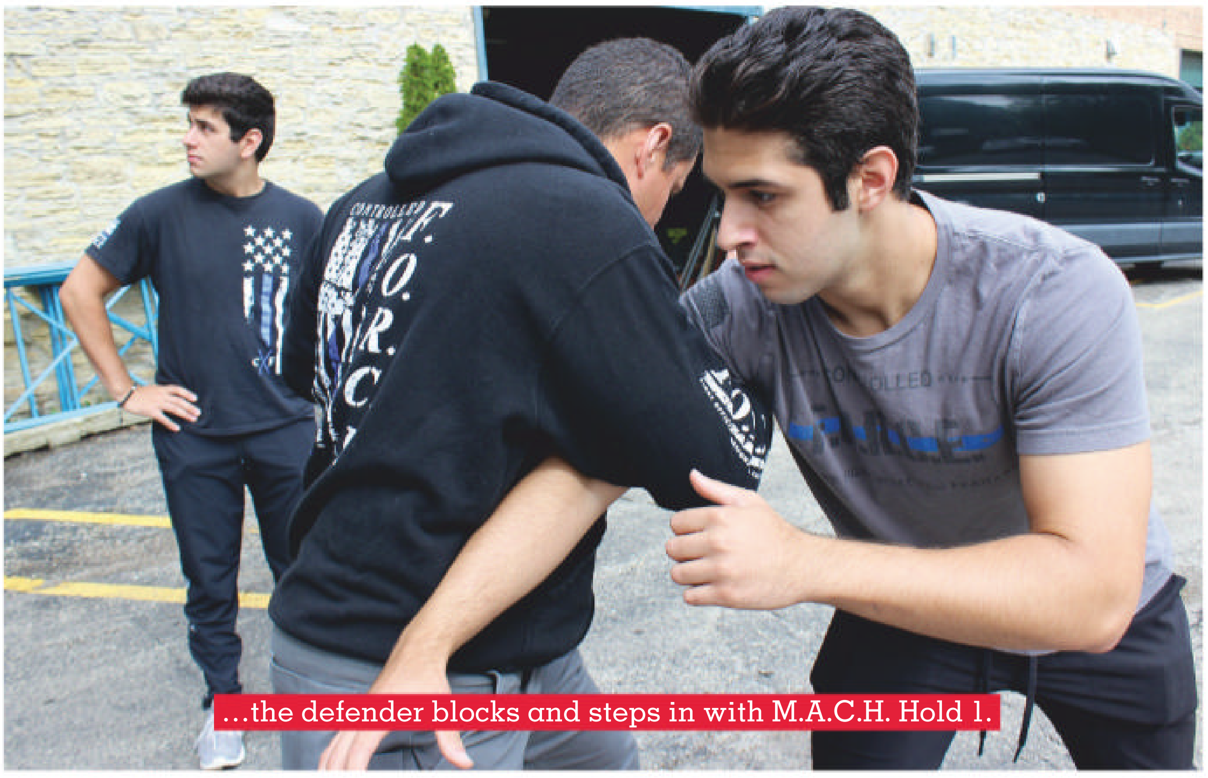
AVOIDING A FIGHT MEANS YOU DON'T RISK GETTING HURT OR BEING ARRESTED.



The defender has his hands up as the attacker moves in.



As the attacker reaches in…



…the defender blocks and steps in with M.A.C.H. Hold 1.

away, get distance and disengage. As always, keep him in your sights until you are at a safe distance.

ADDITIONAL TIPS AND STRATEGIES

Read, know and understand your environment.

Pay attention to your surroundings. Know where you are and where you're going, and have a route planned to quickly remove yourself and loved ones from the immediate area should things get ugly.

The most important factor when a situation is about to turn violent is to identify immediate threats and establish an escape route. Being able to disengage and remove yourself and those with you from any problem area is the ultimate de-escalation technique.

Don't try to hold back strangers. Control those with you. We have all been in a situation where we are with a friend who gets into an argument with a server, patron at a baseball game, fellow concertgoer or another stranger. It may start out with an innocent bump on the shoulder or accidental spill of a beer, but then tensions flare.

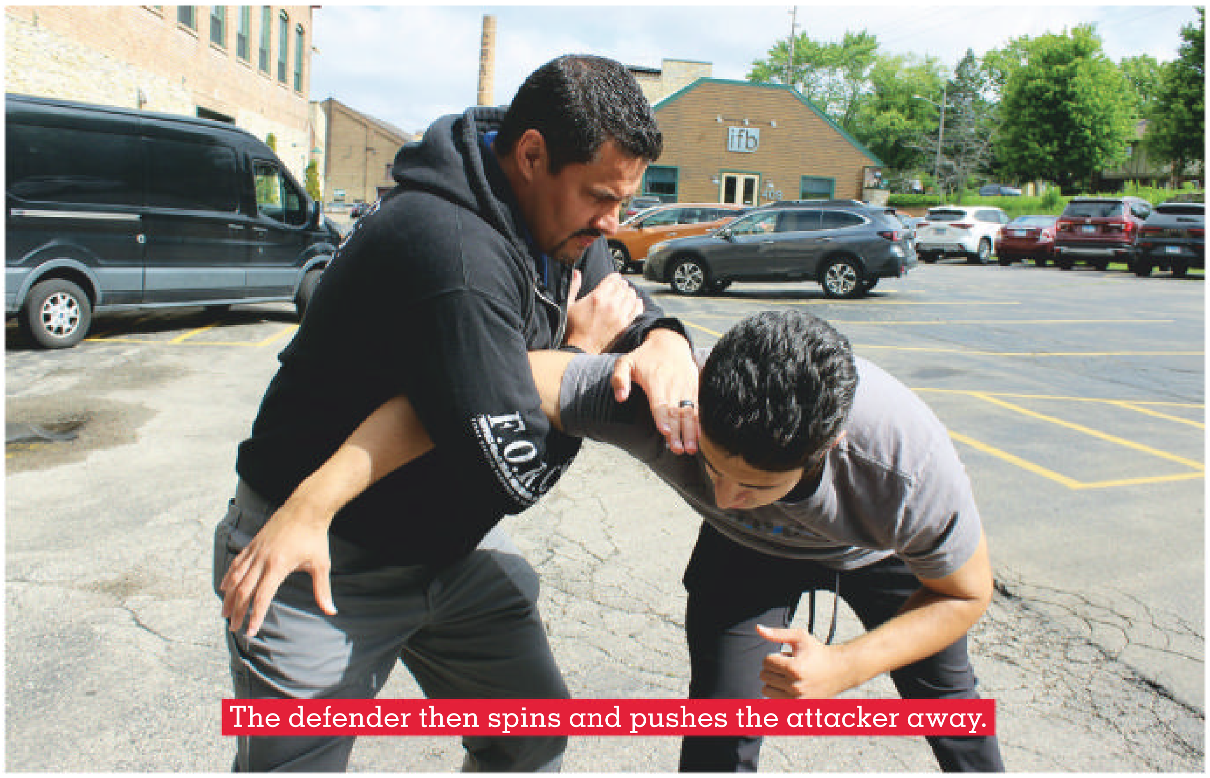
You step in the middle and try to calm things down, but it seems more difficult with every passing second. It is much easier to de-escalate people you are with than to defuse the attitude of a stranger. Grab your friend, pull him/her away, tell them to shut up, do whatever it takes. Apologize to the would-be opponent and get your friend out of the aggressor's line of sight by telling the person that you are with to walk away. If this is something that happens on a regular basis, you might consider leaving that friend at home.

Humility is the best part of humanity. There is nothing wrong with being humble. Develop a thick skin and realize that walking away isn't a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.

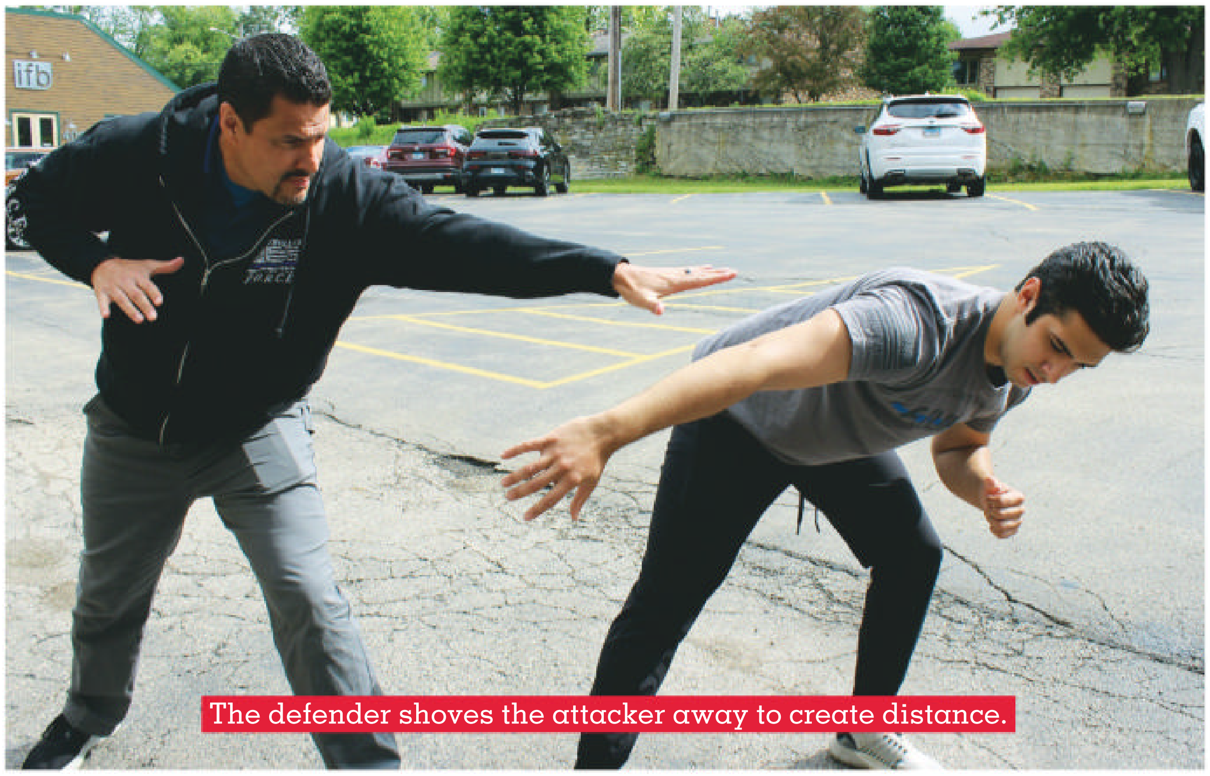
We teach our children that it takes the bigger person to walk away. Adults should lead by example. De-escalation is a skill set that can not only be used at the verge of a violent encounter, but also in your everyday life.

Stay humble, my friends—it makes life so much easier.

About the Author *Waysun Johnny Tsai is the Special Programs Manager and an Instructor for Controlled F.O.R.C.E. He has 36 years of experience as an internationally recognized self-defense instructor.*



The defender then spins and pushes the attacker away.



The defender shoves the attacker away to create distance.

ALERT SIGNALS

WATCH FOR THESE SIGNS OF IMMINENT VIOLENCE.

I have seen a lot of "barking" and can tell when it's more than just angry talk. Here are a few signs that can help you tell the difference between someone just shooting off their mouth or about to attack.

1 They won't stop approaching you no matter how much you back up or try to talk them down. Give yourself three chances to get away or talk your way out of the fight. After that, it's go time.

2 As the person aggressively approaches, they pull up their pants at the waist. This is a typical sign of adjusting clothing before the fight. Be ready.

3 The aggressor comes running or charging at you with balled-up fists. In this instance the fight is imminent. It's OK to swing first with a preemptive strike.

Check out defense classes to make sure they're teaching practical techniques, not just showy moves.

SAFETY

START THEM YOUNG

TEACHING KIDS PERSONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES

BY JIM COBB

WHAT SEEMS LIKE A LIFETIME AGO, I SPENT SEVERAL YEARS WORKING AS A PRIVATE DETECTIVE AND PROCESS SERVER. ONE TIME, I KNOCKED ON THE DOOR TO A HOUSE AND IT WAS ANSWERED BY A YOUNG GIRL, MAYBE 6 YEARS OLD AT BEST. I ASKED IF HER PARENTS WERE HOME AND SHE SAID HER MOM WAS SLEEPING AND HER DAD WAS AT WORK.

I ASKED HER TO PLEASE wake her mom up, as I had a delivery for her. She said she couldn't do that. As we spoke further, I told her it was really important that I speak to her mom, just for a second. She kept saying that she couldn't go wake her up. She then went and got a cordless phone and called her dad at work. That's when I realized what was going on. This poor little girl was home alone and had answered the door, likely after having been told explicitly not to do so. When I got on the

Tell your children to use their voice to get attention if they're in trouble. "These aren't my parents! Help me!" will get people looking their way.

phone with dad, I told him who I was, why I was there, and that I was leaving the papers on the patio table near the door. I did exactly that, then told the little girl that she needed to close and lock the door and not answer it again until mom or dad were home.

I think about that situation a lot, and how it could have turned really ugly if I'd been someone with bad intentions. As parents, we often worry about the world around us and how we can protect our children from its dangers. Let's look at a few things that parents should teach every child.

MEMORIZE CONTACT INFO

As soon as a child is old enough to understand why, they should be taught to memorize information that will help reunite them with you, should something go awry. This includes:

- **Their Full Name**
- **Parents' Names**
- **Home Address**
- **Parents' Phone Numbers**

If you become separated—if they get lost at the county fair, for example—the security staff will be able to get in touch with you quickly if the child can provide them with a number to call. Taking it a step further, if the child were to be abducted, they can try to tell a neutral party who they are and how to find their parents.

Assure your children that they can come to you about anything, no matter how bad it might be.

SECRETS CAN BE DANGEROUS

There's a difference between a secret and a *secret*. Not telling anyone that your best friend is crushing on a classmate is one thing. Not telling anyone that a coach at school has been meeting with you one on one after practice and doesn't want you saying anything about it is quite another.

Stress to your child that they can come to you about anything and that you'll always do everything you can to help, to make things right. They need to be able to trust you with anything they tell you. Sure, there are guaranteed to be times that you'll find it necessary to act on the information in a way that they don't appreciate, such as if they come to you about a friend who is in a dangerous relationship, but try to find a way to handle it that doesn't out your child as a snitch.

Tell your kids they should stand up to bullies and fight back if necessary.

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN

COMMUNICATION IS KEY.

Make a point to talk to your kids often. Ask about their day, chat about what they're learning in school, learn the names of their friends. The more involved you are in your child's life, the more comfortable he or she will be coming to you about problems and issues that might come up.

One thing we did when our kids were young was to ask them to list the worst two or three things that happened that day, followed by the two or three best things that happened. These prompts were good ways to open the door to discussing issues that were bothering them or that they were excited about.

> THE MORE CONFIDENT THE CHILD IS, THE LESS LIKELY THEY'LL BE A TARGET FOR ABUSE.

That said, the child's safety should take precedence over everything else. Better that they're angry with you for a while, then not alive at all.

GOOD/BAD TOUCH

Your child should understand that their body is theirs and they can say no if someone wants to touch them in a way that makes them uncomfortable. Further to that point, they should tell you right away if someone does touch them. Naturally, there are some situations where people other than parents will have to touch them, such as at the doctor's office, and that difference should be explained to the child as needed.

SAFE WORD

The media tends to overemphasize the danger of stranger abductions as, generally speaking, abductions and abuse far more often involve adults known to the child. That's why it's important to set up a simple protocol with your kids so that they'll know whoever is picking them up has the necessary permission to do so by you.

Perhaps the easiest way to do this is to establish a safe word that's only given to those adults who are allowed to pick up your child. If Uncle Bill shows up at school one day to give little Susie a ride home, he should know that the safe word is "elephant."

Teach young ones your name and your phone number, in case they get lost.

If he doesn't know the word, then the child shouldn't get into the car.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

The goal here isn't to turn your child into a miniature version of Jason Bourne, but they should be taught to be aware of their surroundings. If they walk to and from school, they should be doing so without having their face buried in their phone. Eyes up, head on a swivel at all times. This will help them to avoid getting hit by inattentive drivers as well as reducing the risk of other hazards. If they can see a dicey situation up ahead, they'll hopefully be able to work around it, rather than be caught by surprise.

BASIC SELF-DEFENSE

Your child doesn't need to become a black belt, though there's nothing wrong with pursuing that if the child decides to do so. Either way, he or she should learn some simple defense moves that they can employ if they're attacked. While a young child isn't going to have much power when it comes to punches or kicks, strikes to an assailant's knees, groin or eyes can still be effective.

One of the side benefits of learning self-defense techniques is that it can increase the child's self-confidence. A child (or adult, for that matter) who exhibits self-confident body language is less likely to be a target for thieves, bullies and abusers.

ANTI-BULLYING TECHNIQUES

Conventional wisdom dictates that if a child is bullied, they should ignore it, as bullies thrive on attention. They should also tell a teacher or other trusted adult, as well as try to stay away from places where the bullying occurs. That's all well and good, but sometimes that may not be enough.

The self-confidence that arises from taking defense classes can often reduce or eliminate the odds of being a bully's victim. Bullies seek out victims they feel are either physically weak or have low self-esteem, and thus aren't going to fight back. Often, once a bully understands that their chosen victim won't just sit there and take it, they'll move on. Children should also be encouraged to stand up for others who they see being bullied.

Kids don't need to be Bruce Lee, but they should know some simple techniques to fight back and escape.

[SECTION / 05]

EVERYTHING YOU NEED, AND THEN SOME

GEAR & GADGETS

BEST BUYS

NEW PREPPER PRODUCTS

BY PSG STAFF

WE REACHED OUT TO PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN THE SURVIVAL FIELD FOR THEIR INPUT ON THE LATEST ITEMS TO HIT THE MARKET. WE ALSO SCOURED THE INTERNET TO FIND WHAT HAS CAUGHT PEOPLE'S ATTENTION.

1 JASE CASE

One of the biggest concerns in emergency planning is how you can handle severe illnesses and infections if you can't get to a doctor. Jase has assembled a kit containing several of the most powerful and commonly prescribed antibiotics, including amoxicillin-clavulanate and ciprofloxacin, along with a detailed guide with information on each medication. Included in the price is a consultation with a board-certified physician.

- **MSRP** $260
- **URL** *Jasemedical.com*

2 COMPANO KNIFE

This everyday-carry key chain carabiner folding knife is the daily partner you didn't know you needed. The 1.5-inch high-carbon stainless steel blade sharpens easily and holds the edge for quite some time. The integrated carabiner makes it simple and easy to attach to your key chain or your pack, so you'll always have it at your fingertips. At just a couple of ounces, you'll never notice the extra weight, but you'll appreciate knowing it's there.

- **MSRP** $44
- **URL** *CRKT.com*

3 MULTI-FUEL STOVE

Expand your options when it comes to camp cooking. This stove is designed to use wood or gas (with an adapter that's sold separately), as well as hexamine tablets and liquid fuels like alcohol. The wide, stable base allows you to use larger pots and pans without tipping. Plus, it has an extra-large cooktop so you have somewhere to set your utensils and such. It all folds up nice and flat for packing. All told, it weighs 29.4 ounces.

- **MSRP** $65
- **URL** *Ncampgear.com*

Antibiotics could be a lifesaver in a crisis.

1

Emergency Antibiotic Guide
250 mg

2

BOND DESIGN

3

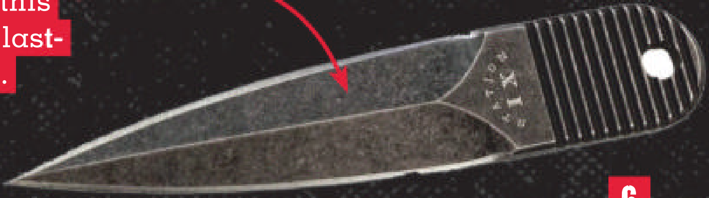
The wide base makes for a very stable stove.

4

5

Easy to conceal, this dagger is a great last-ditch weapon.

6



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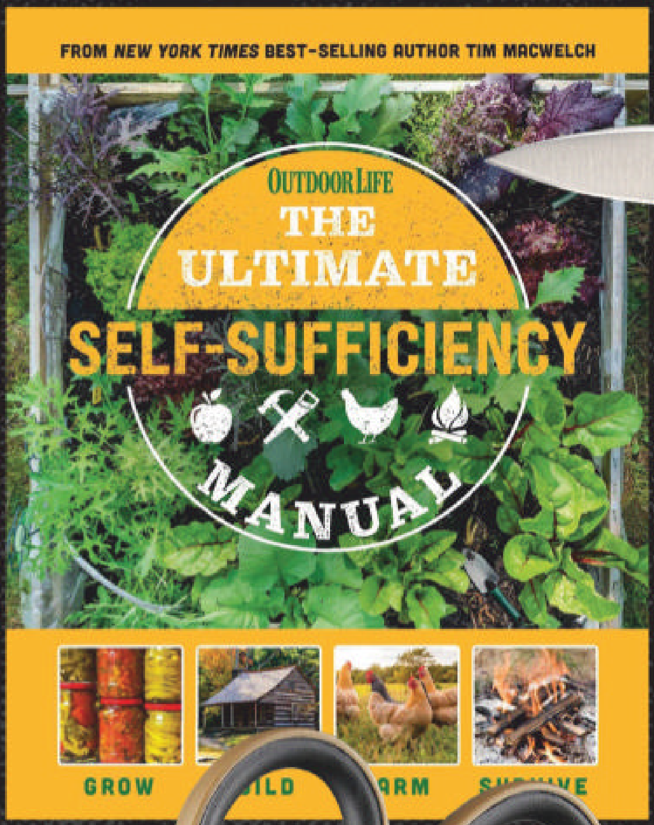

FROM *NEW YORK TIMES* BEST-SELLING AUTHOR TIM MACWELCH
OUTDOOR LIFE
THE ULTIMATE SELF-SUFFICIENCY MANUAL
GROW
BUILD
FARM
SURVIVE

9

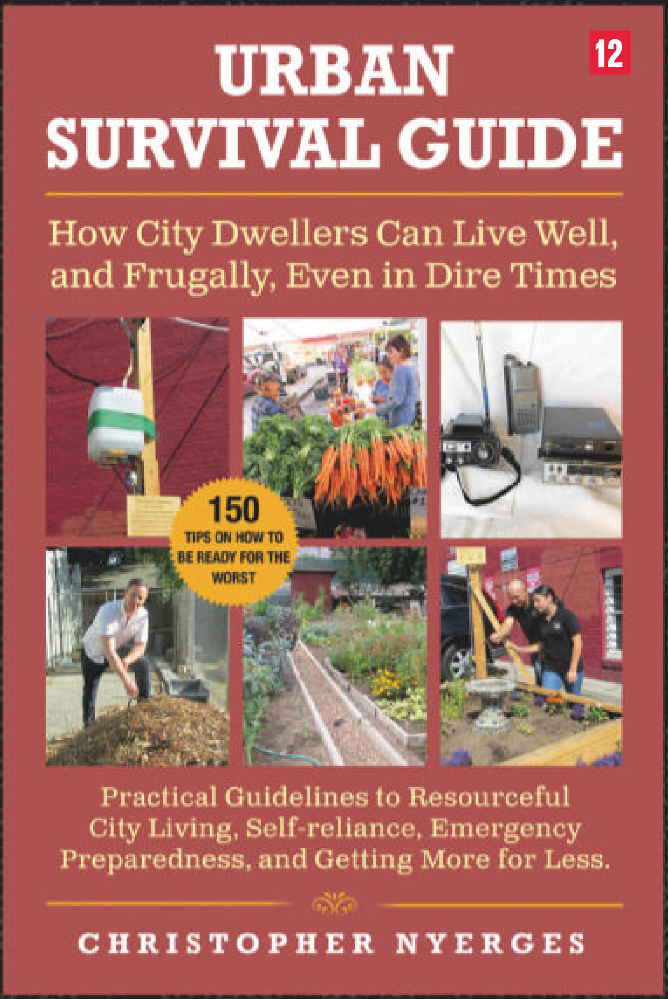
The light comes with a rechargeable battery; also runs on three AA alkaline batteries.

10

11

SURVIVOR
STREAMLIGHT

12


URBAN SURVIVAL GUIDE
How City Dwellers Can Live Well, and Frugally, Even in Dire Times
150 TIPS ON HOW TO BE READY FOR THE WORST
Practical Guidelines to Resourceful City Living, Self-reliance, Emergency Preparedness, and Getting More for Less.
CHRISTOPHER NYERGES

4 A/T 8 HD BOOT

If you take care of your feet, they'll take care of you. This boot has all the features needed in tactical footwear, while also being comfortable to wear for the long haul. It has a perforated tongue for breathability, keeping you cool all day long. A heat-reflective sock and infrared refracting leather, combined with the 5.11 A.T.L.A.S. load system and plate, means you can carry more with less impact on your feet.

- **MSRP** $185
- **URL** *511tactical.com*

5 ALL-SEASON BLANKET

Keeping this in your vehicle or your pack could mean the difference between life or death in a bad situation. It is designed to trap air and keep you warmer longer. Unfolded, it measures 7 feet by 5 feet and it weighs just 16 ounces. It is waterproof and the bright orange makes you more visible to rescuers. It's inexpensive enough to keep one in each vehicle, too.

- **MSRP** $17
- **URL** *Survivalresources.com*

6 LAPEL DAGGER

The SOE, or Special Operations Executive, was a clandestine branch of Britain's military during WWII. This Lapel Dagger is similar to a last-ditch defense weapon they were issued. It is intended to be carried around the neck or sewn onto clothing, such as behind a lapel or inside a pocket. At just 3.125 inches long, it will fit almost anywhere and give you one more edge against an attack.

- **MSRP** $55
- **URL** *Stati9n.com*

7 PREP SURFACE

Something many campers seek is a flat work surface for food prep. Rather than balance a cutting board on your knees, use this. When the legs are unfolded, the work surface is about 3 inches from the ground, saving you from crouching quite so far. The top is 6.5 inches by 9 inches, giving you plenty of space. When you're done, it folds flat and even nests within the Multi-Fuel Stove.

- **MSRP** $34
- **URL** *Ncampgear.com*

8 THE ULTIMATE SELF-SUFFICIENCY MANUAL

Tim MacWelch has written an incredible series of books in the prepper and survival niche and this is his latest. It is packed with over 280 tips and hints on building your own self-sufficient life. He covers everything from gardening and raising animals to handling a heat wave and planning an evacuation route.

- **MSRP** $30
- **URL** *Amazon.com*

9 STICKLER KNIFE

CRKT has long been a leader in the knife industry, known for their innovative designs that are very functional as well as eye-catching. The Stickler is an assisted-open folding knife that is patterned after the classic melon knife. It is lightweight at just 2.4 ounces and it has a blade length of 3.38 inches. The action is fast and snappy and a pocket clip keeps the knife secure.

- **MSRP** $75
- **URL** *CRKT.com*

10 TRAUMA SHEARS

In an emergency, seconds count and when you need to get through clothing to treat a wound or injury, you need shears that are up to the task. These have hardened stainless steel blades that are twice as thick as most other trauma shears, but with a patented blunt tip and curved design for safety. The heavy-duty center bolt won't loosen over time, either.

- **MSRP** $40
- **URL** *Xshear.com*

11 SURVIVOR X USB

This handheld light has a right-angle head with a tightly focused beam. It can be attached to gear easily with the rear clip. It has a low-profile bezel and provides three lighting modes, the brightest being 250 lumens. There is also a D-ring so you can hang the light if needed. A rubber domed push button switch provides easy operation, even if you're wearing gloves.

- **MSRP** $83
- **URL** *Brightguy.com*

12 URBAN SURVIVAL GUIDE

Christopher Nyerges has been an urban homesteader for many years. In his latest book, he goes through how to prepare for disasters, knowing that it an take a long time for any sort of organized assistance to reach you in a crisis. With over 300 pages and numerous color photos, Nyerges leaves no stone turned.

- **MSRP** $16
- **URL** *Amazon.com*

You don't always need to trade quality for cost.

KNIVES

FIXED BLADES UNDER $50

GREAT TOOLS AT REASONABLE PRICES

BY MICHAEL D'ANGONA

THE ECONOMY OF TODAY IS NOT ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE AVERAGE CONSUMER. PRICES ARE UP, AND WHEN ONE HAS TO PURCHASE MULTIPLE ITEMS FOR AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE OR JUST TO REPLACE WORN-OUT OLD GEAR, KEEPING COSTS DOWN IS AN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY.

LUCKILY FOR YOU THERE are quality options in the fixed-blade-knife category on the market today that can provide you with a quality knife for either urban or rural applications without putting a large dent in your wallet.

These knives run the gamut from small, utility-style blades to rugged outdoor styles, to ergonomic all-purpose selections that can be your go-to cutting tool during your daily activities. No matter which you choose, rest assured that you'll have a handy, quality blade by your side while still keeping some cash snugly tucked inside your pocket.

GERBER GEAR EXO-MOD CAPER

Sometimes simple is the way to go and the Exo-Mod fits that philosophy perfectly. This full-tang knife offers a skeletonized design that is easy to grip, easy to clean and very easy to modify with other Gerber Gear Mod knives. The economical yet high-performance blade is ideal for your next hunting or fishing trip and also makes a great utility knife for around-the-house use. The lightweight Exo-Mod includes a belt-mounted sheath for easy carrying and for snap-together modification when needed.

Specifications

- Lightweight, skeletonized design
- Full-tang construction for high durability
- Streamlined design offers multiple carry options
- Overall length: 7.33 inches
- Weight: 1.80 ounces

MSRP $36

URL *GerberGear.com*

KA-BAR FORGED WRENCH KNIFE

KA-BAR OLEAN NY

You can't get more no-frills than the Wrench knife and that's the genius behind this economical, fixed-blade option. Forged as a solid, single piece of metal, this knife won't let you down in both the durability and the performance departments whenever you put it through the wringer. It's designed to be tough as nails for both urban and rural use. The Wrench knife includes a simple hard plastic sheath, an integrated hanging or attachment hole, and a veritable lifetime of down-and-dirty use.

Specifications

- 425 high-carbon stainless steel
- Full-tang construction
- Drop-point blade design
- Overall length: 7.12 inches
- Weight: 0.2 ounces

MSRP $45

URL *Amazon.com*

GERBER GEAR DOWNWIND

This drop-point, fixed-blade knife can be your go-to knife for almost any indoor or outdoor task. Its intelligent design features an amalgamation of functionality and aesthetic beauty with a G-10 scaled handle, subtle jimping on the spine and control choils streamlining down the fatigue-free, long-use handle. The included sheath offers a secure home for the knife, as well as a free-flowing attachment point on your belt to avoid snags and damage. The Downwind offers performance and quality without a heavy strain on your wallet.

Specifications

- Machined multilayer G-10 scales
- Waxed canvas sheath
- Pre-drilled, integrated lanyard hole
- Overall length: 8.97 inches
- Weight: 4.59 ounces

MSRP $33

URL *Dlttrading.com*

CRKT BIWA

The perfect companion for your hunting or fishing trip when weight and space is at a premium, the Biwa performs big, while featuring both a small footprint and an affordable price tag. This slim knife allows you to cut tangled fishing line, skin with precision, slice bait in a flash, and perform any number of other regular or unusual needs that arise on your trip. The Biwa is built tough with a full-tang design, a G10 handle and a thermoplastic sheath that can protect against whatever nature dishes out. This fixed-bladed wonder can become your best companion on your next outdoor adventure.

Specifications

- Easy-to-sharpen, high-carbon steel blade
- Full-tang construction
- Resin-infused fiber handle
- Overall length: 6.63 inches
- Weight: 1.60 ounces

✖ **MSRP** $48
✖ **URL** *CRKT.com*

GERBER GEAR DOWNWIND CAPER

This knife will keep some cash in your wallet while still providing a huge bang for your buck in the field when performance counts. The Downwind Caper is ideal for deep-woods hunting trips when breaking down game is at the top of your priority list. Its specialty is close-up, precision slicing exemplified by its oversized choil and jimping on the end of the blade. Need intricacy with your cuts? Then reach no farther than this knife, and with its included waxed sheath hanging by your side, you won't have to.

Specifications

- Multilayered G-10 scales
- Jimping and control choil
- Includes waxed canvas sheath
- Overall length: 7.24 inches
- Weight: 2.10 ounces

✖ **MSRP** $45
✖ **URL** *GerberGear.com*

CONDOR TOOL & KNIFE BUSHGLIDER

Take the Bushglider on your next hunting trip and you won't be disappointed. This workhorse won't let up until the job is done, without causing a strain on your budget. It's equipped with a flat grind, a natural finish and an edge that won't let up; you'll give up long before this knife does. Its high-impact, polypropylene handle allows a sure grip, even when wet or covered in dust, dirt or debris. The polypropylene sheath is easy to carry anywhere and keeps the knife secure until you need it. Take the Bushglider into the bush and beyond. This is a no-frills tool that punches way above its weight class.

Specifications

- 1095 high-carbon steel
- Polished, Bowie-style clip-point design
- High-impact polypropylene handle and sheath
- Overall length: 9.10 inches
- Weight: 5.60 ounces

✖ **MSRP** $48
✖ **URL** *Amazon.com*

CRKT MINIMALIST SPEAR POINT

This knife is made for cutting and it completes its mission with flying colors. The Minimalist Spear Point offers an ergonomic handle that transfers all your arm's energy into its stubby, yet powerful blade, ripping through most material with ease. Its compact design and multiple mounting option sheath almost guarantees that you'll have this trusty blade always nearby when needed. And when the blade dulls from intense and steady use, it sharpens to a fine edge like a pro and gets back to work in no time flat. It has a low cost and provides a reliable performance with a compact design.

Specifications

- Easy-to-sharpen, stainless steel blade
- Includes durable thermoplastic sheath
- Stonewash blade finish
- Overall length: 5.19 inches
- Weight: 2.10 ounces

MSRP $36

URL *CRKT.com*

KERSHAW DESCHUTES CAPER

A field dressing specialist, the Caper is especially designed and adapted for piercing and slicing in the field. It features an extended bolster and jimping along the blade's spine, which allows both better control and precision. The Caper's rubberized, textured handle offers a secure grip in all weather conditions and reduces hand fatigue for long breakdown sessions. This knife won't stake a hard stab at your budget, but will become an integral, and long-term, addition to your field kit.

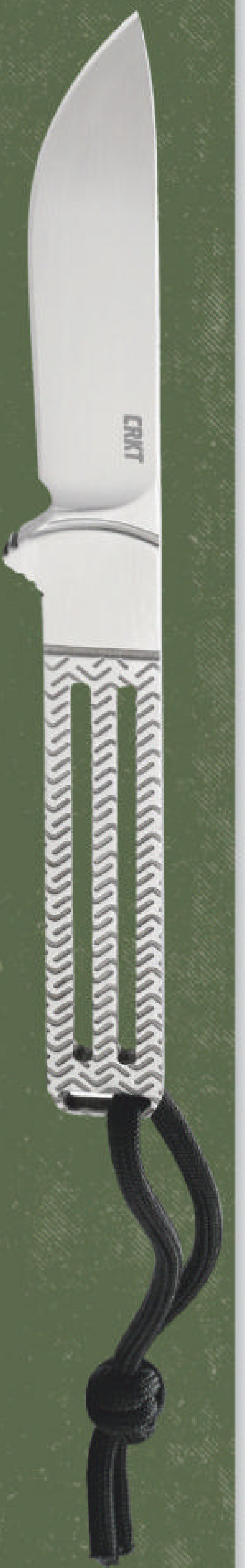
Specifications

- D2 steel construction
- Rubberized, green polypropylene handle scales
- Included glass-filled nylon sheath
- Overall length: 7.00 inches
- Weight: 1.70 ounces

MSRP $48

URL *Kershaw.kaiusa.com*

CRKT TESTY



Compact, streamlined and ready to tackle almost any household or outdoor task, the Testy offers big attitude with its drop-point blade and skeletonized body. This knife won't break the bank, but it will slice through most material with ease, and with its compact size and multi-carry options sheath, you'll always have this little number nearby. Additionally, this knife comes complete with a pre-drilled lanyard hole with cordage, a textured handle for a stable grip and a reliable overall design by renowned creator Jeff Park.

Specifications

- High-carbon stainless steel blade
- Extremely lightweight and compact
- Textured handle for a secure grip
- Overall length: 5.85 inches
- Weight: 1.10 ounces

MSRP $26

URL *CRKT.com*

CONDOR TOOL & KNIFE TERRASAUR

The perfect blade for bushcrafters, hunters, fishermen or overall adventurers, the Terrasaur offers a straight-forward, no-nonsense blade that will perform wherever and whenever you need it. Its nearly indestructible handle stands up to the rigors of the outdoors or the unpredictably of the urban jungle. The Terrasaur comes complete with an ambidextrous sheath that is just as rough and tumble as its sharp-edged companion. It arrives razor sharp out of the box and ready to work, no matter what you ask it to do for you.

CONDOR
EL SALVADOR

Specifications

- 1095 high-carbon steel
- Ambidextrous sheath
- Ultra-durable polymer handle
- Overall length: 8.80 inches
- Weight: 7.10 ounces

MSRP $42
URL *Amazon.com*

KERSHAW DESCHUTES SKINNER

Equipped with a nearly 4-inch blade, this in-the-field knife will make short work of your captured game and skin it in no time flat. Its all-weather handle will stand up to the rigors of the outdoors and provide a firm grip in wet or muddy conditions, and keep working until the job is done. The Skinner offers both reliability and ideal control and precision when you need it most, critical in a skinning knife. An integrated lanyard hole, a belt-carry nylon sheath and the well-known reliability of Kershaw round out this amazing package.

Specifications

- Stonewashed drop-point D2 blade
- Rubberized handle for a secure grip
- Includes black, glass-filled nylon sheath
- Overall length: 8.65 inches
- Weight: 1.70 inches

MSRP $50
URL *Knifecenter.com*

CRKT SCRIBE BLACKOUT

This unique pocket-sized knife transforms from an innocent USB looking device into a functional utility knife with a quick repositioning of the cap, and can help you with minor tasks throughout your day. Its D2 steel blade easily retains an edge while its textured handle offers a secure grip while you slice. An integrated lanyard hole is perfect for cordage or to attach to your key chain for fast access when needed, or its included pocket clip can be used for low-profile carry.

Specifications

- D2 blade steel offers excellent blade retention
- Durable, glass-reinforced nylon handle
- Integrated low-profile pocket clip
- Overall length: 4.13 inches
- Weight: .90 ounces

MSRP $26
URL *CRKT.com*

Don't let the small size fool you, this knife is ready to work.

BUYING GUIDE

CHOOSE WISELY

PROS AND CONS OF THE ASSAULT PACK

BY ADEN TATE

PREPPERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD ARE FAMILIAR WITH THESE SMALL-SIZED BACKPACKS, BUT WHERE DO THEY REALLY EXCEL? IS THIS THE TYPE OF SACK YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO RELY ON FOR A FULL BUG-OUT BAG OR TO GET YOU BACK HOME AFTER AN EMP? OR, PERHAPS THERE ARE OTHER SITUATIONS IN WHICH WE SHOULD RESORT TO THIS SORT OF SETUP?

WHAT IS AN ASSAULT PACK?

Typically, when somebody uses the term "assault pack," they're referring to a small tactical backpack that allows one to carry a minimum amount of necessary gear while maintaining mobility. These packs can't hold as much as a full expedition backpack can, but if you need more space than your pockets permit, an assault pack can be the answer.

For our purposes here, we'll consider anything less than 3,000 cubic inches

A versatile tool, an assault bag allows you to carry a good amount of gear while maintaining your speed and mobility.

HyFin® Vent
COMPACT
Entry/Exit Wound
CHEST SEAL TWIN PACK
REF 10-0042
NORTH AMERICAN RESCUE®
www.NARescue.com • 888.689.6277
35 Tedwall Ct • Greer, SC, 29650 • USA • Phone: (864) 675-9800

A tourniquet, HyFin chest seal and small pouch filled with Celox, gauze and bandages should all be kept in the assault pack.

(49 liters) to be small enough to be considered an assault pack. If it's larger than that, it is a full-on backpacking pack, not an assault pack.

A tourniquet is an essential piece of medical gear to keep with you at all times.

WEAKNESSES

The main negative of an assault pack is the lack of room. Preppers are notorious for trying to carry too much on their person as it is, but when you're forced to downsize? That's difficult. This lack of space means that using an assault pack as an overnight bag may be challenging, to say the least. For example, take the Condor Compact Assault Bag. While it is possible to live out of it for a night, after you pack in your water, MRE, tarp and hammock, you'll be out of space for a sleeping bag. You will then have to use something akin to the SOL Escape Bivvy or drop a few hundred dollars on an ultra-light backpacker sleeping bag system.

It's doable, but it's not fun. Nobody's arguing for maximum comfort in the event of a disaster, but there simply is not enough space within an assault pack to carry everything that is needed for one or more nights out in the woods without living a rather spartan existence.

Assault packs are smaller and more compact than full-size backpacks, making them easier to carry. But that means you need to be very conscious of what you plan to put in them, as space is at a premium.

These small bags also severely limit how much food and water you'll be able to carry. When backpacking, I've found I need to carry at least two bottles of water on my person at all times (and sometimes more). This is very difficult to accomplish with an assault pack loaded with overnight gear. Food-wise, you're only going to be able to carry maybe a full day's rations. Assault bags have their place, but for most, overnight trips aren't it.

STRENGTHS

So, if using it as a get-home or bug-out bag isn't the most beneficial use of an assault pack, where do they excel? What jobs are these tools suited for?

To get the most out of your assault pack, it needs to be relegated to serving in an EDC capacity, as a portable med kit, or for patrol/sentry duty after a collapse. You will be much better served using this pack to stuff in ammunition, magazines, food rations, two bottles of water, a poncho, maps and radio gear than you will with attempting to use it as a bug-out bag. Whereas they're too small for overnight use, they're perfect for bringing enough supplies nearby to keep a guard well-armed and happy.

The same goes for creating your own field hospital bag. If you want to carry a large amount of medical gear for field use, an assault pack will serve the job perfectly. For example, use it if you're concerned that somebody in your group at a protest could be injured by counter-protestors. There's plenty of room inside for bandages, Celox, gloves, eye rinses, tweezers, medical shears and more.

That's where an assault pack excels—when it comes to rapid transport of manpower and gear to a position not far from a base camp. And in our circumstances here, a base camp could be a house, vehicle or office.

CONSIDERATIONS

When it comes to shopping for the perfect assault pack, there are a few things that you're going to want to look out for.

USE SMALLER POUCHES TO KEEP YOUR GEAR ORGANIZED AND EASY TO FIND IN THE PACK.

The overnight setup from the author's assault pack on a recent backpacking trip. It was very cold.

TRY DIFFERENT PACKS UNTIL YOU FIND ONE THAT FITS YOUR BODY WELL, SO IT IS EASY TO CARRY LONG-TERM.

SPACE

This is priority No. 1 in my book. Yes, you choose an assault pack because of the inherent mobility it gives, but you also need to ensure that it is giving you enough space to accomplish whatever goals you may have.

Violent gangs ravaging your locale and you want to conduct a bit of post-collapse reconnaissance work? You need to be able to fit your binoculars, scanner, radios, recording devices, notebook and antennas, among other things. Will your assault pack give you the space needed to carry all of that? Choose the pack that provides you with as much space as possible.

COLOR OR PATTERN

This typically isn't too much of a problem within the assault pack industry, but you're going to want to make sure that the bag you pick will easily blend in with wild environments. Remember, these bags are predominately for a post-collapse world. You are going to need the ability to blend in.

The catch is that in normal times, most assault packs are going to stand out too much. Everyone sees the man in the militarized backpack. After a large-scale disaster strikes, though, everybody is a target, so being concerned about blending in with your pack goes right out the window.

FABRIC

If you're getting an assault pack, it is with the understanding that there may come a day you need to spend a significant amount of time outdoors. And what happens outdoors? It rains. As a result, you are going to need a pack that

MINUTEMAN
ROCKET STOVE

Here, an assault bag carried the gear necessary to bake bread on an off-grid stove.

is weatherproof. It doesn't have to be fully submersible as a bag, but it can't soak up water like a sponge. You should already have the contents of the main pouch separated with dry bags, but the smaller pouches are not likely to contain waterproof mini bags, and a pack that absorbs water gets heavy fast.

While you can weatherproof an assault pack yourself with various aftermarket products such as Scotchgard Heavy Duty Water Shield, it's easiest if the bag is already weatherproofed for you.

READYWISE
CHICKEN & DUMPLINGS
MOUNTAIN HOUSE ADVENTURE MEALS
XMRE BLUELINE
Edible Wild Plants

If you have a child, an assault pack can serve as a lightweight means for them to assist the family by carrying a few items.

COMFORT

Yes, comfort does matter. You may think you'll be able to just suck it up, but why do that when you don't have to? Don't choose a pack that makes you feel as if you need to lean forward to keep from falling backward. Don't pick one that painfully rubs your shoulders or neck. Pick something that won't distract you, limit your mobility, or lead to potentially lethal post-collapse infections.

Assault packs are worthwhile tools, but you have to know their capabilities. A proper balance of gear to mobility is necessary, and for achieving this balance, an assault pack excels.

About the Author *Aden Tate is a writer in the beautiful South. He's the author of* The Faithful Prepper: A Christian's Perspective on Prepping *and the lulu.com book* An Arm and a Leg.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST ASSAULT PACKS ON THE MARKET.

✖ Mystery Ranch 2-Day Assault Pack
Just about anything Mystery Ranch makes will work perfectly for our purposes here, but the 2-Day Assault is a fantastic option. The bag holds 27L, giving you plenty of space for day-to-day tasks without feeling overbearing. Two water bottle pockets are equipped on each side to keep you hydrated while you're out in the field, MOLLE webbing allows you to attach extra pouches and the zippers are weatherproofed. A further benefit of the 2-Day Assault is that it is discrete enough of a pack that you could make it part of your EDC without screaming "military" as you move throughout society.

✖ Osprey Archeon 30
On the larger end of the spectrum is the 30L Osprey Archeon 30. This is a heavy-duty pack that will enable you to carry roughly 20 pounds of gear with minimal fuss. Osprey packs are known for being about as comfortable as it gets as well, so if you've had previous problems with dropping money on hot, awkward and painful bags, switch to Osprey, and you'll never have that problem again.

✖ Condor Compact Assault Pack
If you're looking for a budget-friendly assault pack, it's hard to go wrong with Condor. This model will hold 23.9L in a wide array of pockets, helping you to keep everything right in reach for when it's needed most. MOLLE strapping throughout the outside of the bag will allow you to easily strap on additional pockets as well. Just don't put too much faith in the hip belt here—it doesn't do much.

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